

**God made the earth, but the earth had no base and so under the earth he made an angel. But the angel had no base and so under the angel's feet he made a crag of ruby. But the crag had no base and so under the crag he made a bull endowed with four thousand eyes, ears, nostrils, mouths, tongues and feet. But the bull had no base and so under the bull he made a fish named Bahamut, and under the fish he put water, and under the water he put darkness, and beyond this men's knowledge does not reach<sup>1</sup>.**

Quart 4(50)/2018  
PL ISSN 1896-4133  
[s. 67-98]

# **The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher.**

**Parc de La Villette in Paris in the context  
of contemporary philosophical concerns**

**Part I**

**Cezary Wąs**

Uniwersytet Wrocławski



<sup>1</sup> J. L. Borges, M. Guerrero, *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, revis. enl., transl. N. T. di Giovanni, Harmondsworth 1974, s. 25 (s.v. Bahamut).

<sup>2</sup> See E. W. Lane, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from the Thousand and One Nights* (London 1883, footnote 115: "In Ibn-Esh-Shineh, 'Kuyothán'; the orthography of this word is doubtful, as the vowel-points are not written. As the tradition is related in Ibn-El-Wardee, this bull takes a breath twice in the course of every day (or twenty-four hours): when he exhales, the sea flows; and when he inhales, it ebbs. But it must not be imagined that none of the Arabs has any notion of the true theory of tides: the more learned among them explain this phenomenon by the influence of the moon. Many of the Arabs attribute earthquakes to the shanking of this bull".

<sup>3</sup> See *ibidem*, footnote 116: "In Ibn-El-Wardee, a quantity of sand is introduced between the bull and the fish".

<sup>4</sup> See *ibidem*, footnote 117: "Ed-Dameer-ee, on the authority of Wahb Ibn-Munebbih, quoted El-Ishákee, 1.1". All the additions in the quotation come from Lane.

The above quoted excerpt from *Manual de zoología fantástica* (1957) by Jorge Louis Borges is based on the work of Edward William Lane *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from the Thousand and One Nights* (London 1883), of which the relevant excerpt on pages 106–107 reads as follows:

The earth [under which appellation are here understood the seven earths] was, it is said, originally unstable; „therefore God created an angel of immense size and of the utmost strength, an ordered him to go beneath it [i.e. beneath the lowest earth] and place it on his shoulders; and his hands extended beyond the east and west, and grasped the extremities of the earth [or, as related in Ibn-El-Wardee, the seven earths] and held it [or them]. But there was no support for his feet; so God created a rock of ruby, in which were seven thousand perforations, and from each of this perforations issued a sea, the size of which none knoweth but God, whose name be exalted; then he ordered this rock to stand under the feet of the angel. But there was no support for the rock: therefore God created a huge bull, with four thousand eyes and the same number of ears, noses, mouths, and feet; between every two of which was a distance of five hundred years' journey; and God, whose name be exalted, ordered this bull to beneath the rock; and he bore it on his back and his horns. The name of this bull is Kuyootá<sup>2</sup>. But there was no support for the bull: therefore God, whose name be exalted, created an enormous fish, that no one could look upon on account of its vast size, and the flashing of its eyes, and their greatness; for it is said that if all the seas were placed in one of its nostrils, they would appear like a grain of mustard-seed in the midst of a desert: and God, whose name be exalted, commanded the fish to be a support to the feet of the bull<sup>3</sup>. The name of this fish is Bahamoot [Behemoth]. He placed, as its support, water; and under water, darkness; and the knowledge of mankind fails as to what is under the darkness”<sup>4</sup>.

## Introduction

The basic problem in formulating a diagnosis of the present condition of art, including the presumption of its death, which has been returning since the times of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, is the simultaneous existence of several different traditions of its understanding. However they may be wished to be separated, only together they are able to reflect the diversity of current manifestations of artistic activity. In this situation, the metaphor of art's achievement of the end and its transition to the state of the past is just as justified as they are the claims of its exuberance and



avant-garde character also in the world of pure intellect. Statements about the end of art or, on the contrary, its running into the future, seem to be as worn out as they are inevitable. However, do the artists' current works offer an opportunity to use both ultimate metaphors, those of life and death, and to find the point at which they converge?

Such considerations should begin with a reminding that the seemingly obvious concept of art has changed historically. Władysław Tatarkiewicz described this changeability in a way that can now be considered classic already in the 1970s<sup>5</sup>. However, the richly developed diversity of the concept of art characterised by Tatarkiewicz should be complemented by the divisions suggested by Jacques Rancière<sup>6</sup>. According to them, the most frequently cited tradition of perceiving art is a formula that can be called "Platonic". It assumes that the works of artists should be a visible representation of a higher, invisible world, in Christianized neoplatonism – the divine one. Plato himself was opposed to art imitating reality and valued works that reflected the world of ideas more. Such a concept was at the basis of all religious art, but it also returned in the views of philosophers who were sceptical about religion. An example of the latter can be Arthur Schopenhauer, in whose theory all arts objectified Will by means of ideas occupying a lower level in relation to the supreme category<sup>7</sup>. Music, however, has been attributed with the possibility of imitating the whole of Will as closely as the Ideas themselves which objectify Will. Within the "Platonic" vision of art there are also demands that art should also refer to important ideas created by human, especially to the idea of the nation. Often repeated in the 21st century aggressive statements against art suspected of weakening social integrity, especially in countries where religious or political authoritarianisms are maintained, indicate the permanence of the "Platonic" concept of art.

The second, equally influential theory of art can be linked with the philosophy of Aristotle. In some contrast to "Platonic", it assumes the closeness of art and life, the servitude of the artist and their products to the various needs of life. According to this assumption, works of art are made for human benefit, starting from the almost natural need for decoration, through works visually propagating the content of faith, politics or morality, to the products of craftsmanship (once) or aesthetically sophisticated products of technology (nowadays). Taking into account the eternity of the occurrence of art in this convention, it should be less surprising to see the phenomenon known as the "aestheticization of everyday life", which, combined with the Marx theory of commodity fetishism, is supposed to define the times of postmodernism<sup>8</sup>. The anthropologically oriented history of art, connected with the views of Hans Belting, David Freedberg or Georges Didi-Huberman, emphasizing not only the practical applications of art, but also its relations with the body, also falls within this, probably the oldest of all, view on art<sup>9</sup>.



<sup>5</sup> W. Tatarkiewicz, *Sztuka. Dzieje pojęcia*, [in:] *idem, Dzieje sześciu pojęć. Sztuka, piękno, forma, twórczość, odtwórczość, przeżycie estetyczne*, Warszawa 1975.

<sup>6</sup> J. Rancière, *The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes. Employments of Autonomy and Heteronomy*, "New Left Review" 2002, no. 14, p. 135; the same issue in a broader sense – see *idem, Le Partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique*, Paris 2000, pp. 26–32.

<sup>7</sup> A. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, wyd. 2, Leipzig 1844, § 52, pp. 289–290.

<sup>8</sup> M. Featherstone, *Postmodernism and the Aestheticization of Everyday Life*, [in:] *idem, Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, London 1991, pp. 65–66.

<sup>9</sup> L. Steinberg's book *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (Chicago 1983, 1996), is an example of the persistence of the way of thinking about artistry as an activity closely related to the body in more recent art history, tracking, among others, the erection of the member of Christ on the Cross (*ibidem*, s. 298–300). Carnality and sexuality of architecture was described by M. Wigley in his book *White Walls, Designers Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge [Massachusetts.] 1995.



<sup>10</sup> E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*, Garden City [New York] 1944, pp. 176–217.

<sup>11</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen 2010, pp. 102–103.

<sup>12</sup> Criticism of this position was not taken up until 1960s in the work of L. Dittmann *Stil, Symbol, Struktur. Studien zu Kategorien der Kunstgeschichte* (Aachen 1967) and in the lecture of E. Gombrich *In Search of Cultural History* (Oxford 1969).

<sup>13</sup> See A. C. Danto, *Art and Meaning*, [in:] *idem, The Madonna of the Future. Essays in a Pluralistic Art World*, Berkeley 2001, p. xxx: “Contemporary art replaces beauty, everywhere threatened, with meaning”. A transition of a work of art into the sphere of thought is completed by its interpretation, which gives it the status of a “theoretical thing” (*res speculativa*); see in this regard: A. C. Danto, *Artworks and Real Things*, “Theoria” 1973, no. 1/3, p. 15: “The moment something is considered an artwork, it becomes subject to an interpretation. It owes its existence as an artwork to this and when its claim is defeated, it loses its interpretation and becomes a mere thing. The interpretation is in some measure a function of the artistic context of the work; it means something different depending upon its art-historical locations, its antecedents and the like”.

The third tradition of understanding art is connected with the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant. The philosopher from Königsberg, situating the experience of beauty next to cognitive power and the ability to make moral choices, made art an insoluble problem. For if aesthetic experiences are non-conceptual and disinterested, which can be translated into the belief that art does not enable cognition and has no practical value, then the question arises: what can be said about such a strongly autonomic activity? Are formal art games similar to logical and mathematical ones? Art in the shadow of Kantian thought must have ceased to be a subject, because the question of its status became more important. Turning art towards oneself was as apt as it was questionable, hence since Kant’s time the a-cognitive-ness and amorality of art has been called into question. Even for neo-cantists, as in the case of Ernst Cassirer, art was a kind of cognition, interpretation of reality and a form of language of its description<sup>10</sup>. The cognitive aspirations of art and the diversity of its entanglement in the needs of life were also the subject of Hans Georg Gadamer’s deliberations<sup>11</sup>.

In Hegel’s opinion, the neutrality of art noticed by Kant was inscribed in the historical scheme, which led to the statement that artistic activity and its products were not always free from intellectual content, but rather became such in the processes of development of consciousness. Reasonableness, therefore, ceased to be expressed by art only over time and when it found its more appropriate representation in philosophy. Paradoxically, however, it is the Hegelian philosophy that is responsible for the long-term conviction that ideas characteristic for a certain time are reflected in art. A decisive part of the works of traditional art history, including works by Max Dvořák, Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky, was based on the assumption that epochally important ideas filled works of art with content<sup>12</sup>.

The Hegelian thesis about the death of art and the taking over of its tasks by philosophy was questioned by Arthur Coleman Danto. In the writings of the American author, the philosophizing the end of art approximates the philosophizing “the end of philosophy” characteristic of philosophy of deconstruction, by which the term should be understood a kind of reflection addressed not so much to the outside world, but to philosophy itself and its metaphysical foundations. In his texts Danto suggested that art after its “death” not only turned into a philosophy of art, but became a philosophy in its purest form<sup>13</sup>. If we assume that this view is correct, it should be stated that art, in a manner worthy of philosophers’ competence, began to deal with the same problems that are currently raised by the philosophical avant-garde. After such an assumption, works of art, once merely illustrating philosophical theses, should now become fully-fledged participants of important philosophical discourses. However, a question has to be asked: what specific conditions would a work, potentially belonging to the world of living art after its death, have to ful-



fil? Secondly: is it empirically possible to indicate a work or a class of works confirming the existence of art that are radically different from the previous ones?

The first condition for the existence of art created after its death would be its non-existence in the world of objects. The works described by Danto, such as Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box*, might have been visually unattractive and dependent on philosophical texts written by artists, but they still existed materially. Their value was based only on meaning, but the question should be asked: have they already reached the level of abstract signs of writing and the subtlety of poetry in accordance with the criteria described by Hegel? A kind interpretation would probably confirm their philosophicality, but discursive elements can also be found in works of the most distant epochs. A work of art born after the death of art would have to fulfil more demanding criteria: it would have to non-exist even more than holes in the ground of Dennis Oppenheim or Robert Morris's cardboards, used by Danto as examples, and moreover it would have to function fully in the context of problems of exceeding metaphysics or questions about God posed by the most hardened philosophical atheists of today. To make it more difficult, it should be added that it should be an architectural work, since architecture, in Hegel's opinion, as the most material of the arts, least adequately represents the absolute Spirit. Multiplying the difficulties and requirements one should demand that this purely intellectual work be indistinguishable from everyday life, common like a street pavement and useful as a playground for children and animals.

Increasing the theoretical demands on the resurrected work in the world of pure spirit, demands that are deliberately exaggerated, cannot, however, deny the fact that it is easy to identify contemporary works of this kind and at the same time to argue that they exist necessarily, which in this case means that they exist beyond the beginning and the end, beyond life and death. As an example of a work desired by the outlined theory it was chosen in this study Parc de La Villette in Paris, whose authorship is suspended between a philosophizing architect Bernard Tschumi, and Jacques Derrida who explores the architecture of philosophy. The park as a genre seems to be the most suitable for considerations on the locating that pollutes the purity of non-existence, since this property of it was manifested already in the time of Eden and remained valid in all its later exemplifications.

In the present study, we will therefore consider how the design of a park in a neglected, at that time, area was entangled in deliberations on Plato's extremely vague statements about the *chôra*; a concept that returned in later philosophy in religious, a-religious and anti-religious contexts to cast on the designed area, a specific non-place, **a shadow of the most embarrassing of all beings, the being of God**<sup>14</sup>.



<sup>14</sup> The problem of linking intrinsic meaning of the Parc de La Villette with contemporary theological thought was inspired by J.-L. Cohens's article *The Architect in the Philosopher's Garden: Eisenman At La Villette*, [in:] *Cities of Artificial Excavation. The Work of Peter Eisenman, 1978-1988*, ed., introd. F. Bédard, Montréal 1994, p. 226. Although Cohen only suggested that the discussion between Derrida and Eisenman goes back to the depths of their common Jewish traditions, the question of God was asked during their correspondence accompanying the design of the Parc de La Villette; see J. Derrida, *Letter to Peter Eisenman*, "Assemblage" 1990, no. 12, p. 8.





<sup>15</sup> For the topic of "Grand Travaux" see A. Fierro, *The Glass State. The Technology of the Spectacle. Paris, 1981-1998*, Cambridge [Massachusetts] 2003, pp. 2-41; for the topic of Parc de La Villette see *ibidem*, pp. 182-205.

<sup>16</sup> See A. Tate, M. Eaton, *Great City Parks*, New York 2015, p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> See D. Voldman, *Le Parc de La Villette entre Thélème et Disneyland*, "Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire" 1985, no. 8, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> See A. Tate, M. Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>19</sup> See *Architecture Competition and the Production of Culture, Quality and Knowledge: An International Inquiry*, ed. J.-P. Chupin, C. Cucuzzella, B. Helal, Montréal 2015, p. 243 (there also criticism of the competition).

<sup>20</sup> See E. Winterbourne, *Architecture and the Politics of Culture in Mitterrand's France*, "Architectural Design" 1995, no. 3/4; cf. also M. Koops, *Die Konstruktion nationaler und europäischer Identitäten: am Beispiel der französischen Kulturpolitik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Parc de la Villette*, Osnabrück 2002.

## The context of founding the park

The creation of the park was closely related to François Mitterrand's coming to power in France in May 1981. The victory of the socialist in those years could be treated as proof of the final victory of the utopia of a liberal and democratic state with a wide range of welfare and universal prosperity. More than as proof of the end of history, Mitterrand's presidency proved to be the beginning of posthistory and postpolitics based on a fierce struggle for pure prestige. Already in 1983, the head of state forced the government to abandon left-wing economic policy and the Socialist Party was transformed into a power group without the ambition to propose radical changes. Perhaps, however, the claim to abandon the ideals of socialism is imprecise and the left has entered a new, less political state?

The belief that Mitterrand was one of the best presidents in the history of post-war France was probably due to his involvement in cultural policy, the most spectacular example of which were the so-called Grand Projects (*Grand Travaux*, officially known as *Grandes Opérations d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme*)<sup>15</sup>. Even before the destruction of the economic visions that were supposed to distinguish this presidency and turned out to be a pipe dream, cultural policy became a tool for creating a common conviction that the new government was unique. On the territory of slaughterhouses closed since the mid-1970s, in the 19th district of Paris, Mitterrand appeared already two months after his election as president<sup>16</sup>. With this visit, the concepts of creating a park in this area, already considered for several years, began to take the form of administrative decisions. In March 1982 the Grand Projects programme was announced, including the Parc de La Villette. On 8 April the same year, the Minister of Culture Jacques Lang announced a competition for a park project<sup>17</sup>, which in December selected a group of nine winners, and on 25 March 1983 the final winner – Bernard Tschumi<sup>18</sup>.

It would be extremely difficult to accuse the lack of objectivity in the choice of an international jury consisting of eminent figures from many different fields, including the excellent Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti and Anglo-American architectural theoretician Joseph Rykwert, but it can be seen that the choice made by judges, though controversial, was surprisingly consistent with the intellectual basis of Mitterrand's endeavours. Tschumi's project also had a political dimension. If the decision to build a park was a state decision, i.e. a decision of an institutionalised community, then a question arises about the characteristic features of this community, whose forward-looking component was to be the area defined as the "park of the 21st century"?

It is now out of the possibility to examine the influence of François Barré<sup>19</sup>, representing the political world, on the decisions of the 21-member jury, but the outcome of the competition contained the quintessence of left-wing philosophy<sup>20</sup>. Although the details of the



jury's decision are impossible to reconstruct today, it can undoubtedly be said that Tschumi's concept was the most distinct and its specificity was the lack of application of hierarchical systems, deprivation of an orderly structure and blurring of boundaries, which together gives stimulus to associate it with the ideological tendencies of the modern left. The specific openness or even semantic emptiness, as well as the lack of connections with a specific set of meanings, also bring this idea closer to the modernist avant-garde.

The closeness of views of Tschumi and Mitterrand is confirmed by the content of the relevant *passus* from the interview which Yoshio Futagawa conducted with the architect<sup>21</sup>. Tschumi reported in it on a meeting with the President, during which he presented him with a several-metre-long board showing four different parks: the Baroque foundation from Versailles of Louis XIV, the 19th century Les Buttes-Chaumont in Paris with a landscape character, Parque Ecológico de Águas Claras in Brasília, which represented the 20th century, and Parc de La Villette foretelling the next century. Although Mitterrand's opinion at the time seemed to the designer to be restrained and enigmatic, further developments already indicated his unequivocal support for the realisation of the work, even when he was opposed by his advisers. Simultaneously with the construction of the individual sectors of the park of La Villette in Paris, Parc André Citroën was also created, supported by the mayor of the city and political competitor of Mitterrand, the Gaullist Jacques Chirac. Although Brigitte Weltman-Aron's study highlights the similarities between these gardens<sup>22</sup>, the suspension of work on La Villette after the taking office of president by a representative of the right-wing may indicate a different political orientation of Tschumi's intentions. However, they should not be treated as purely political, because in general they were "not-pure", but rather violating the rules of their own field and displacing the borders of others. In addition, their realization occurred as if outside of visibility, in the sphere of thinking treated as action or experience. What is visible there makes sense only as a form of depraved intellect, an eroticised philosophy.

The problem with Tschumi's work brings to mind the situation with Daniel Libeskind's Jüdisches Museum in Berlin, which aroused horror when shortly after its construction it showed its empty interiors and the vacuum after the murdered which it symbolized, made it extremely poignant. However, when it was filled with didactic exhibitions, it tamed itself and shifted its speech into the area of attractions and pleasure. The Parc de La Villette similarly fulfils its assumptions by activating mainly its philosophical premises; it is an area of becoming of thinking, according to the post-Hellenic Danto's doctrine. The park functions as a conscious intellect, so in the way which Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling assumed for a work of art long before Danto. Giving an advantage its philosophical power, it fulfils the conditions for art to function after the end of its previous formulas.



<sup>21</sup> Y. Futagawa, *Interview with Bernard Tschumi*, "GA Dokument Extra" 1997, no. 10, pp. 35–36.

<sup>22</sup> See B. Weltman-Aron, *Rhizome and Khôra: Designing Garden with Deleuze and Derrida*, "Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française" 2005, no. 2.



<sup>23</sup> B. Tschumi, *Cinégram Folie: Le Parc de la Villette. Paris, Nineteenth Arrondissement*, Princeton 1987.

### Tschumi's theoretical assumptions

In 1987, when Tschumi's essay on Parc de La Villette was published<sup>23</sup>, the political directness of the views of this participant in the Paris events of May 1968 was filtered through the concepts of Roland Barthes, Phillippe Sollers and Jacques Derrida. Instead of explicit calls for political change, Tschumi characterized architecture as such an element of the social structure, that praised stability, is saturated with the violence of old regimes and completely inadequate to the current conditions of collective existences. The changes in architecture suggested in the theses about La Villette, as in aesthetic utopias from the times of Friedrich Schiller to Le Corbusier, were to replace purely political activity. According to Tschumi, it was no coincidence that the previous architects presented themselves as creators of forms that harmoniously correlated forms and functions, structures and meanings, programmes and contexts. Works based on the principles of a consistent composition of the characteristics of a work presented themselves as homogeneous because their coherence was supposed to reflect, but also influence the order and integration of the community. The problem was that modern societies can no longer function well on the basis of the principles of uniformity or clear order. Similarly, an architect can no longer present themselves as a strong, autonomous personality producing works separated from other areas of culture. Nor is it possible to maintain the concept of a work clearly expressing intentional or unintentional content.

New cultural conditions lead to decisive changes in the concepts of architecture, creator and work. The newly-conceived field of constructing does not seek a clear definition of its features, but rather is based on indecisiveness, disintegration and decay. The architect must be oriented towards resistance to the tradition of their vocation and social expectations. In turn, the work should be produced not so much with regard to the principles of formal composition, but rather as an effect of questioning the structures, orders and procedures used so far in the design of architectural work. Taking into account inspirations and achievements from other areas, such as theories of literature, psychology, film or philosophy, the designer consciously weakens their independence and autonomy of the field. A disintegrated and decentralized society must gain an ally in a product of non-traditional techniques of object emergence devoid of unity and meaning.

The changed modes of architectural creation emphasize, first of all, the conflicting premises of a potential work. The assumed work is to reveal that it is not possible to achieve compatibility between form and function, the space being developed and the activities of those who use it after, and finally between the structure of the work and its commonly understood meaning. Correlations accepted so far as possible to achieve, such as the compatibility between form and





function, belong to the category of social and artistic ideologies forcing passivity and submissiveness of individuals towards past reasons. The architecture envisaged in Tschumi's essays could no longer function as an element of the social norm. Instead of accepting unconscious imperatives, techniques of violating rules and undermining recognized norms were propagated. So it is no coincidence that the most spectacular elements of the Parc de La Villette, i.e. the red pavilions, referred both to small buildings typical of landscape parks, described as *folies*, as well as to the word *folie*, which means madness.

In his comments on the Parc de La Villette, Tschumi discussed many possible strategies for shaping architectural plans. His recommendations stated that instead of striving for synthesis, the designer should have used analysis, disconnection and fragmentation of the components of the work. The isolated elements could then be replicated after highlighting possible differences between the reiterated elements. This procedure can be described as the creation of variants (variations). The transformations of the Parc de La Villette's initial red cube can be an example of the multiplication technique combined with distortion. For this kind of "mechanical operations", Tschumi found inspiration in Gérard Genett's work *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, in Georges Perec's novels, and more generally in the milieu of *Tel Quel* magazine and the group of writers from OuLiPo (Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle). Tschumi equated also the multiplication of differences and their juxtaposition with the concept of *différance*, characteristic for the philosophy of Derrida<sup>24</sup>.

Tschumi's texts often refer to the notions of dissociation and dysfunction, to which he gave a new understanding. In his opinion, the existing architecture was understood as a static system traditionally based on utility, creating meaningful forms, adjusting its relation to the environment and ensuring structural durability. Instead, he proposed disconnected and even conflictual treatment of the decisive conditions of the emerging work. He defined dysfunction as a formula for shifting assumptions from their established position towards exceeding, violating the rules and abolishing limitations. In this doctrine, work on the edge, border or margin of architecture was mainly reduced to polemics with the traditional treatment of architecture, especially with the emphasis on its autonomy. According to Tschumi, the history of construction is focused on hiding and suppressing possible alternatives in determining the goals of building. The history of the fields emphasizing masterpieces and great artists have the task of paralyzing creation and replacing it with re-creation. Dysfunction, dissociation or crossing borders in Tschumi's system is mainly a polemic with the separation of architecture and philosophy imposed by tradition. Referring to the works of Joyce, Artaud and Bataille, he pointed to the blurring of the division between literature and philosophy. However, increasing the position of philosophy in



<sup>24</sup> B. Tschumi, *Parc de la Villette, Paris*, [in:] *Deconstruction in Architecture*, ed. A. C. Papadakis, "An Architectural Design Profile" 1988, No. 72, London 1988, p. 35: "The concept of disjunction is incompatible with a static, autonomous, structural view of architecture. But it is not anti-autonomy or anti-structure; it simply implies constant, mechanical operations that systematically produce dissociation (Derrida would call it *différance*) in space and time, where an architectural element only functions by colliding with a programmatic element, with the movement of bodies, or whatever. In this manner, disjunction becomes a systematic and theoretical tool for the making of architecture".

non-philosophical fields cannot be considered the same as the Hegelian doctrine of philosophy taking over the main tasks of the spirit, since philosophy is also now going beyond its tradition. Yet, autonomy is not overthrown, but disrupted. To be crossed, the borders must remain intact.

Tschumi's park project did not show the intention of distributing functions in the predicted area, but presented three independent layers to be superimposed on the area and used to match them with applications suitable for the city garden. The separation of elements of the park, like the already existing articulation of space, were treated as secondary to the abstract system. The most important drawing of the general layout presented a kind of axonometric diagram of three levels, which were to be finally joined at ground level [il. 1]. The upper layer included two main arteries crossing at right angles and supplemented them with an image of a fractured circle, several lines similar to the letter L and two other ones intersecting almost perpendicularly. All elements are connected by a line winding along the terrain like a film tape in a large projection device. The two main axes that intersect the park are the streets defined as Galerie de La Villette and Galerie de l'Ourcq (along the Canal de l'Ourcq) from Allée du Canal on the other side of the watercourse. Within a fragmentary circle planted with trees, a central park meadow called Prairie du Cercle is located. A similar meadow, the Prairie du Triangle, is also located between the slightly open arms of two intersecting wooded alleys: Allée du Zenith and Allée du Bélvédère [il. 2]. Along a winding line, twelve thematic gardens were established. Each element of the abstract drawing has therefore been used to connect it in real space with meadows and alleys typical of parks. It may even seem that the lines scattered in the drawing have something in common with a similarly disordered English landscape park.

The second level shown in Tschumi's drawing showed a network made up of intersecting lines, the intersections of which are emphasized by forty-two small red cubes imposed on the sketch. As in the case of the upper layer operating with lines, the designed grid was also used to create a system of small buildings in real space. To a large extent, regardless of the other layers and the landform features, 26 pavilions were erected in the park where, after the grid plan had been imposed on the surface of the garden layout, the intersections of the lines were located randomly. They were not placed in places where other park buildings already stood, although in a few cases the pavilions are connected with the old buildings [il. 3]. Each of the pavilions was a variation of a red cube with ten-metre-long edges [il. 4]. Named after the old tradition of park buildings, the *folies* were used to place cafes, information and ticket points, a belvedere and other functions proper to parks [il. 5]. Although the *folies* evoked associations with buildings such as the red telephone booths in London or the projects of Russian

constructivists, they did not, in principle, symbolise any content and did not inform about their functions. “Le cases sont vides” – as Tschumi stressed.

The next layer was created by planes and, to a greater extent than the other two components of the project, it depended on the actual terrain. Tschumi showed the outlines of already existing buildings, such as Grande Halle and Cité des Sciences et de l’Industrie, but at the same time suggested quite free shapes of the surface for other functions [il. 6]. Imposing all three layers on a real surface resulted in a structure that was not very coherent, which, however, was the designer’s goal.

The unusual shape of the park’s plan resulted from Tschumi’s extensive system of theoretical assumptions, which assumed the existence of complex relations between the character of society and architecture. According to Tschumi, traditional values of architecture, not only Vitruvian triada: *utilitas–firmitas–venustas*, but also ordinary aspirations for a unified form, or legible content expressed by appropriate shapes, are an expression of authoritarian systems and survived despite a clear change in cultural conditions. In order to function properly, old political systems needed the existence of values which, although they had a historical metric, were shown as natural, eternal or rooted in the supreme Being. During an in-depth analysis, they usually turned out to be a combination of random and poorly motivated beliefs, which were then even more strongly presented as unchangeable and punishably inviolable. The norms separated in the sphere of religiosity focused on precepts concerning the body and sexuality. Architecture both resulted from such orders and shaped them. The links were manifold in this respect, ranging from the metaphysics of both disciplines to specific, practical solutions in the area of space design. A characteristic example of normativity hidden in architecture are the walls of old cities and control systems at their borders. Although such clear forms of limitations do not exist anymore, other, very numerous ways of controlling the body and imposing certain behaviours on it with hidden violence have survived in the field of space organisation. An example is even a museum building, where the viewer is led under the watchmen’s eye through logically arranged rooms and forced to bend his head in order to read a plaque under a painting hanging on the wall. The museum is also a form of a monument and the call “remember!”, persuading the visitors to respect the collected set of values. Not only does the visitor’s body undergo matrixing and maceration in an unnoticeable way, but also their mind. The system of gestures and behaviours required for touring is reminiscent of the movement of bodies proper to religious rituals. Tschumi pointed out that a similar kind of violence in architecture has so far been an essential component of it. Designing a park in changed conditions required loosening the restrictions on users’ freedom.





<sup>25</sup> An author who devoted a lot of attention to this issue was **R. Banham**; see *idem*, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, London 1960; cf. also **P. Tournikiotis**, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, Cambridge [Massachusetts] – London 1999, pp. 145–146.

<sup>26</sup> See **J. Derrida**, *Point de Folie – Maintenant l'Architecture*, [in:] **B. Tschumi**, *La Case Vide: La Villette 1985*, London 1986, s. 8: "l'architecture doit avoir un sens, elle doit le présenter et par là signifier [...] il s'agit toujours de mettre l'architecture en service, et au service".

<sup>27</sup> **B. Tschumi**, *Parc de La Villette, Paris*, [in:] *Deconstruction. Omnibus Volume*, ed. **A. Papadakis**, **C. Cooke**, **A. Benjamin**, New York 1989, p. 177: "In its case, the constraints of the built realization both expanded and restricted the research. It expanded it, in so far as the very real economic, political and technical constraints of the operation demanded and ever-increasing sharpening of the theoretical argumentation: the project became better as difficulties increased".

Architecture also maintained violent relations on a deeper, metaphysical level. Its orders were based not only on the so-called architectural orders, but also on causal relations between forms and functions, especially the subordination of shapes to specific applications. Modernist architecture, denying old traditions, only increased the logical relationship between these components of architecture. The problem was also that the rationalization of construction methods was a continuation of the elements of coercion and aiming at a strong social order. It should not be also forgotten that the majority of artistic formulas used by the masters of modernism, such as Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe or Le Corbusier, was only a simplified version of classicism<sup>25</sup>. For Tschumi, most of the procedures, which could be described as composing, were a variation of integrative or synthesising activities and expressed the idea of order. For this reason, the basic issue was to use design that would apply disconnection, disintegration or, to use the terms of Tschumi, disjunction and dysfunction instead of the principle of order.

Rethinking the principles of old architecture led to their deprecation, but without rejection of architecture itself. The problem was difficult, because architecture cannot replace construction with demolition, purposefulness with pointlessness, expression of certain content with meaninglessness. A simple negation would not serve anything, as architecture must – as Derrida wrote – be on duty and must have meaning<sup>26</sup>. The impasse in this respect could have been overcome by the intensification of the theoretical factor<sup>27</sup>. In Tschumi's opinion, the value of the project increased with the strengthening of the role of theory. The existing architecture was characterized by reflectionlessness and recognition of the inviolability of basic principles. This led to a repetition of architecture even when it proclaimed – like modernism – a profound change. In a situation where architecture only strengthened its character, a more serious reform could be achieved only by undermining its doctrinal foundations. The description of "architecture of architecture" was the beginning of its redefinition. The study of the fundamental values of the domain broke the links that make up its traditional image. As a result of analyses of this kind, there was a clutter of fragments requiring ordering in accordance with the disordered nature of contemporary culture. What needed to be recognized as the distinguishing features of architecture was maintained, but functionalised in relation to the needs of societies with less authoritarian inclinations than before. The modeled space maintained the rank of the present state in all its indefiniteness and stood open to the future democracy.

Tschumi's architecture was weakened as architecture, which did not mean that it ceased to be a design of conditions for the behaviour of the community. The series of transformations did not change it mainly in its most indescribable properties. The architect's extraction of architectural possibilities that escaped the name owed



much to Derrida's philosophy and his "other philosophy" proved to be helpful in the creation of "other architecture". The name was replaced in it by an idiom and signature. Making architecture philosophical in the sense of deconstruction was made possible by activating the same features escaping the notions that aroused Derrida's interest. The blurring of borders without losing autonomy meant blurring the transition between philosophy and architecture and, moreover, their politicisation, association with psychoanalytic, literary, film and theological theories. Architecture constituted itself on its peripheries and its blurred borders were widening to the size of new territories.

A separate question was Tschumi's approach to the issue of significance. Both in old and modernist architecture, the content external to the object was signalled by specific forms. The associations were historical and changeable, but some architectural circles considered it necessary indispensable, to maintain relations between certain shapes and the meanings attributed to them. Conservatism, which propagated such behaviour and appeared, among others, in the historizing version of postmodernism, sometimes manifested itself in aggressive statements. In this respect, Tschumi referred to the views of Vincent Scully, who considered the preservation of tradition as the most important task of architecture, and the search for newer principles as a manifestation of stupidity and an act of destruction<sup>28</sup>. These attacks strengthened the image of the differences between the opponents and contributed to emphasizing the position, which in the work of the French architect was occupied (taken, held?) by dismantling the connections between architectural signs and unambiguous content. Tschumi deliberately initiated a conflict with the "obsession with presence", by which he specifically understood the conviction that forms can be permanently correlated with a definable ideological message. He postulated focusing rather on the nature of the signs themselves and combining them with other signs, without taking into account the meaning. Rejection of a fixed resource of messages was a shift of interest to the production of new, uncertain and unstable meanings. When the architectural sign ceases to symbolize what exists and to refer to the allegedly source reality, it begins to perform the task of evoking what does not exist and finally it goes beyond what can be expected. Going beyond existence and being, it opens up politically to the future democracy and theologically to God who does not exist. The park did not mean anything, but it gave room for the appearance of some predecessor of possible meaning to come.

The definition of the values arousing opposition in Tschumi was accompanied by a programme of new procedures. Dysfunctionality, as well as other terms mentioned by the architect, such as dispersion, dissociation or disruption, despite their negative character, turned out to be possible design tools to be used. The first element



<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, *Six Concepts*, [in:] *idem*, *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge [Massachusetts] – London 1996, p. 46.





<sup>29</sup> The grid was also used as a leading theme by P. Eisenman in the deconstruction project Wexner Center for the Visual Arts from 1983; see P. Eisenman, *Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Ohio*, [in:] *Deconstruction. Omnibus...*, p. 154.

of the proposed set of procedures was “superimposition”, which can be treated as a variant of philosophical deconstruction specific to architecture. Thus, for example, the juxtaposition of three abstract drawings with the area already possessing its articulation intensified the incompatibility of the existing parts of the concept and, by the way, the conventionality of earlier architectural notations. In this way the difference was revealed. The three independent layers juxtaposed together in the project were to be perceived as incoherent, conflicting and not bringing the necessary order of functions. One could expect that this kind of plan, used to regulate the alignment of avenues, gardens or the location of buildings, would result in an unpleasant impression of disorder. A park or a garden for a diverse society, requiring a space for free play with content, could not, however, reflect the imaginary universal order of the cosmos, allegedly only logical logic or the simplifications imposed by the work of reason.

The second characteristic formula of the layout was the use of a grid, in which the park *folies* were to be placed in the nodal points. Initially, it could be supposed that the introduced grid was a rational form that imposed order. It could be associated with the Mercator grid, but also recalled the preferences that modernist and later architects had for it<sup>29</sup>. However, after being applied in the site, it is noticed that the long distances between the intersections make the network not bring a sense of intense ordering. Situated in nodes one hundred and twenty metres apart, the *folies* combine with a diverse surrounding and give the impression of being located both regularly and freely. Paradoxically, the grid of red dots argues with rationality rather than expressing it. The irregular edges of the park are not disturbed by it and the area of the whole foundation can be seen as a sewn piece of canvas applied to the city tissue. The grid has no beginning, no end, no centre, does not hierarchize and does not impose anything. Tschumi wrote about its earlier applications in his projects that it was sometimes a mediator between heterogeneous components. If the notion of mediation were to be developed in relation to it, it could now be compared to a computer network or other media network that connects dispersed intelligence without the possibility of its integration into an integrated self. The *folies* in this comparison would play the role of small pieces of writing or image.

The films play a key role in the character of the park. They consist of red steel cubes with a side of more than ten metres using a grid motif. Sometimes they lack filling walls and then the pattern appears very clearly [il. 7]. Equally often the cube is complemented with additional forms: cylinders, circles, spiral stairs, large ramps or wavy canopies [il. 8]. In a few cases, the *folies* are attached to existing 19th century buildings, such as Folie L8 (Théâtre Paris-Villette) and Folie N8 (Folie Janvier) [il. 9]. What the pavilions have in common is the differences between them. Incompatibility of their components was revealed and maintained.



Tschumi's questioning of the whole or the unity as a compositional principle was connected with the attention paid to the fragment. According to the architect, what is considered to be the form of an architectural work is a combination of elements from a specific dictionary. Architecture, unlike ordinary language, is characterized by a much greater ability to create new word-forms, but at the same time it is strongly associated with its tradition limiting the possibility of such changes. Overcoming this situation can be helped by the inspiration from literature research focused on the study of transformational relations, especially the findings made by the aforementioned Genette. In his book's chapter on combinations, Tschumi extensively summarizes Genette's arguments, but also refers to writers who consciously use transformations and permutations (e.g. Raymond Queneau), masters of film editing (Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein), as well as variations that can be found in Johann Sebastian Bach's fugues<sup>30</sup>. The *folies* are variations that owe a lot to madmen and the role they play in societies. It is no accident that park pavilions are combinations of incompatible and colliding components, which gives them a chance to renew our assessment of mental illness. What was usually considered to be spiritually healthy was sometimes only a conglomerate of accidental components considered to be the norm in closed societies. In turn, what was considered mentally ill sometimes even, in strong communities, played a positive role, among others in the development of art, science, tolerance and democracy. Nowadays, the healthy and the sick can exchange their positions much more freely. The position of the healthy has also decreased, and its manifestations have been recognized as fossilized rationale for enforcing artificial unity and evoking order.

The variations made with the *folies* showed that basic forms can be combined in a very large number of ways. The transformations and permutations, however, were not a purely formal or asemantic game. Although they did not refer to the previously assumed content, they created "words" that could be used in the future. They were not directly functional, but they could be used for both ordinary and newer or even unpredictable applications. Their aim was to open up to what is unknown or unable to find its own form. The *folies*, different from the formulas used so far, referred to the issue of temporality. Because usually architecture used forms already known from the past and adapted them to current needs. But the *folies* referred not so much to the past, but to certain precedency, a state preceding the obviousness of a certain form. They were strongly connected with the uncertainty and impermanence of the present, but also went beyond the foreseeable future. Especially their relation to the present became the subject of a commentary written by Derrida.



<sup>30</sup> B. Tschumi, *Cinégram Folie...*, s. 26.



<sup>31</sup> J. Derrida, *Point de folie – Maintenant l'architecture*, [in:] B. Tschumi, *La Case...*; as quoted in: *Architecture. Theory since 1968*, ed. K. M. Hays, Cambridge [Mass.] – London 1998, p. 570: "Maintenant: this French word will not be translated. Why? For reasons, a whole series of reasons, which may appear along the way, or even at the end of the road". Cf. also *idem*, *Maintenant l'architecture. Conférence donnée au Palazzo delle Albere, Musée d'art la province de Trente (décembre 1985)*, trad. C. Popović-Toma, [in:] *idem*, *Les Arts de l'espace. Écrits et intervention sur l'architecture*, ed. G. Michaud, J. Masó, C. Popović-Toma, Paris 2015.

## Derrida's comments

Derrida's considerations used the French word *maintenant* as the leading motif, which in the English version of the essay *Point de folie – maintenant l'architecture* remained untranslated<sup>31</sup>. This raises the question: is the word used appropriate to describe the system of red pavilions or is it just an accidental one? It was the constant Derrida's practice to choose single words and to build extensive analyses with their use. Also, the *maintenant*, with the development of reflections, loses the properties of an unambiguous term and begins to grow into new and unpredictable meanings. As was the case with other words of Derrida's philosophical language, it turns out to be as accidental as it is not accidental, or perhaps neither accidental nor accidental. By presenting his vision of the essence and history of architecture in general and the position occupied by Tschumi's *folies* in it, Derrida inscribes opposing meanings into the term: the *maintenant* can therefore describe pavilions as well as the maintenance of the contract with regard to what should be considered as architecture, and, in the same way, refer to the situation of breaking the contract and surrendering oneself to madness. But never separately. Preservation of the rules must be treated as an excavation of their historical roots and disorderly character. The rules only hide madness, while Tschumi, by subjecting the dismembered cubes to variations, proves that esteemed systems are only a permutation or combination stopped at a particular time. He then sets in motion what is just stopped, but inevitably belonging to the system of changes.

In a simple, dictionary translation, "*maintenant*" means "now", but the absence of English translation was supposed to prevent any suggestion that Derrida would like to present the current state of architecture, or that the *folies* belong to postmodernism, poststructuralism or posthumanism. The problem is rather what is happening to us right now in connection with the task posed by the park. "Right now" is nothing more than the assimilated present. Architecture happening "right now" is the constitution of peculiarity and belonging to a single subjectivity. It happens to us, but it also makes us happen. For what happens through architecture is an experience of spatial articulation necessary to reveal oneself. Separation of space precedes the possibility of understanding, as well as gives space for recording the event. In this case, an architectural event is the same as an event of thinking. The architecture of events created by Tschumi is not the creation of places where something is to happen, nor should its construction be considered as an event, but it is a form of spatiality leading to the appearance of meaning. The event in question is the marking, the activation of meaning, so it is also its violation, i.e. its madness. The *folies* (variations, madness) are a form of question about the happening of the sense/meaning. In this context Derrida reminded the opinions of Kant that reason is found-



ed on architecture, which is the art of building systems<sup>32</sup>, arrangements hiding their unclear justifications and given as invariable. The *folies* make the meanings are being deprived of their accumulated certainty and questions arise about their status, which equals the rank of those supposedly eternal with those resulting from program permutations and combinations. Meanings begin to happen as accidental, thus opening up spaces for new possibilities. These spaces are initially empty (*“Le cases sont vides”* – it is worth recalling once again the characteristics of the pavilions given by Tschumi), but because of this they adapt all the more easily to the changed needs. The most difficult question becomes the question of what a perfect emptiness of these places can mean and what unusual need can it be filled with? The question about emptiness is not a question about what is, maybe not even a question about what can be, but above all it raises the question of what is not. The problem, therefore, is to fill the void with what is radically unpredictable, but also de-ontologized and non-theological. It is possible, but it needs to be strengthened by extensive philosophical interpretations and experiences, which will be taken up in the further parts of this paper.

The multitude or rather infinity of the pavilions located in the park space indicates that they evoke not so much madness (*la folie*), but madresses (*les folies*). Their seriality takes away the meaning of a single imitation and draws attention to their mutual relations, it becomes a study of syntax. Deprivation of the red points of essence and meaning and the focus on semantics reveals how meanings arise, but also how they can disperse and lose meaning. The *folies* are, of course, a record of happening of meanings, but it should be added that it takes place in their dispersion and madness. The meanings are subjected to variations and maintained in this state. The *maintenant* of architecture is therefore a strengthening of the position of the present and a retention of the sense in its independent multiplicity. However, this does not exclude the inheritance of a certain invariability. For variability and invariability are inseparable, they function correctly only as connected with each other.

Architecture as a field has its own architecture, sometimes inclined towards durability, in other cases towards change, but always assembling, constructing. This “architecture of architecture” is both by users inherited, as well as ruling and inheriting them. It is historic, but it penetrates users like something natural. Derrida distinguishes several of its fundamental and unchangeable properties. In a more phenomenological way than one characteristic of deconstruction, it describes a group of unchangeable properties that converge in one postulate: “architecture must have meaning, must make them present and thus signify”<sup>33</sup>. The symbolic content of this meaning depends on the function of architecture, which leads to the conclusion that the “*arché*” of architecture (its foundation) is not architectural in itself, but comes from the outside. What forms the basis of



<sup>32</sup> See I. Kant, *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*, Hrsg. Th. Valentiner, Leipzig 1919, pp. 685–686: “Ich verstehe unter einer Architektonik die Kunst der Systeme. Weil die systematische Einheit dasjenige ist, was gemeine Erkenntniß allererst zur Wissenschaft, d. i. aus einem bloßen Aggregat derselben ein System, macht, so ist Architektonik die Lehre des Scientifischen in unserer Erkenntniß überhaupt, und sie gehört also nothwendig zur Methodenlehre” (A 832/B 860).

<sup>33</sup> J. Derrida, *Point...*, p. 572.

 <sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 573.

the domain is a collection of its dependencies on non-architectural values.

The meaning that the philosopher demands from architecture is the location of experience, the form of habitation, the principle of a home for a man or a god. Works of architecture have always been designed for their presences, allowing them to be. Although the house hid and locked the terror, it gave shelter. The dangerous remained suppressed, although the reduced discomfort of deeper understatement was only seeming. Homelessness locked in a traditional home is currently confronted with homelessness of a newer kind. The indigenous abyssiness and uninhabitedness of being confronted with the conditions of modern existence, in which the house has turned into an urban dwelling, which only to a limited extent can be treated as a refuge for stabilization of existence. The very necessity of strengthening invariability was also eroded.

In opposition to Tschumi's views, who even with some exaggeration advocated violations of old customs, Derrida – as if for balance – evoked the deepest, as if archaic principles of architecture. Such a reminding, far from what could be expected from a philosopher considered as a radical innovator, was aimed at bringing out from the architect's attitude the understated acts of restoration, the efforts to renew rather than to overthrow the rules of the discipline. If Tschumi's actions were to be a kind of deconstruction, then his essays show that it cannot function as a mere destruction of heritage. The call to repeat the *arché* of architecture is just as important in the face of a certain obsession with modernity as any violation of it. The foundations are not based on transcendent, absolute reality and are not inviolable, hence they require thoughtful efforts to preserve them.

The structure and hierarchy of architecture must be subject to the ritual of recalling its origin, updating the times of establishing assumptions that precede their connection with religion or politics. History cannot leave architecture and the destiny of architecture is to be the guardian of archaic memory. Such opinions of Derrida cannot come as a surprise if one takes into account his repeated views on the role of affirmation in the philosophy of deconstruction. In such a case, it would be a restoration of even this lignified or fossilized nostalgia, which is a very form of secular sanctity of each of the fields of culture. The aggressive polemic with Tschumi's purposefulness is a certain game and tears off only its outer, deceased layers, while the teleology of the dwelling itself remains intact, or more precisely, it is shaken in order to be perpetuated in an indeterminate and unstable present.

Architecture is inhabited by a variety of needs, so it may not be surprising that it is now adapting to philosophical functions, as it was previously used for religious or political purposes. Although this may be a question, architecture is always „*in service* and *at service*”<sup>34</sup>. Neither can end its dependence on art and its old determi-



nants: beauty, harmony, or organizing the work as a whole. Even if – as Danto described it – the paradigms of what is considered a work of art change, architecture will belong to this area. Included in a series of works of art in a certain period of time, it cannot be excluded anymore. Its internal mechanisms function well only in conjunction with the external ones, which contributes to the fact that it requires interpretation and anchoring in the world of religious, political, aesthetic, economic and nowadays philosophical values. The denials of architecture made by Tschumi undergo a certain collapse, in fact a double collapse, when after one turn, identical to what Martin Heidegger and later Gianni Vattimo described as “*Verwündung*”, there followed another, turning it towards the oldest sources of architecture. It is not a return to the source, but a return to the sources (plural), there is no question of a return to an established beginning, but rather to an attempt to restart something, to repeat it for the first time. Coming to this place in his deliberations Derrida clearly senses similarities between what is described as Western culture, architecture and metaphysics, all equally moved by similar mechanisms. Twisting, distorting or collapsing architecture arouses resistance in the collective consciousness, in which it turns out to be the “the last fortress of metaphysics”<sup>35</sup>. It is saved from instability, threatening in a situation where contradictory intentions clash, by a kind of “displacement”, a procedure known from psychology of combining broken fragments in a new territory, without creating the fiction of another strongly integrated whole. There is a bond, a certain fusion, but not a strong whole anymore. Disillusionment regarding the idea of unity was perhaps the most serious task that the architect set himself<sup>36</sup>. Instead of building another statement, thought is set aside from its own establishment, yes it turns into a whole, but understood as a set of dispersed fragments [il. 10]. The park is a work, but only as a combination of fragmentation.

Tschumi's texts were sometimes excessively declarative in their denial of tradition, but the park unites its components and creates a specific whole, although it happens on the basis of changed rules. For this reason Derrida defends the architect's actions against suspicions of an “infinite *hybris*”<sup>37</sup>. The *folies* undoubtedly destabilize meaning and generally undermine the meaning of meaning, but they do so without aggression and do not lead to a level where an architectural record would be purely abstract, useless, devoid of aesthetic aura or archaic hierarchies<sup>38</sup>. The language of the discipline is renewed and enables the notation of the particularly elusive features of the present. The *maintenant* is doubled here: it is the maintenance of the present, the preservation of the momentary in timelessness, the retention of the actuality in the abyss of eternity. Derrida defines this activity as the “monumentalization of the moment”, which can be understood as the preservation of transitoriness in memory, the transfer of the blink into the sphere of a clearer experience.



<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> See B. Tschumi, *Parc...*, p. 39: “La Villette looks out on new social and historical circumstances: a dispersed and differentiated reality that marks an end to the utopia of unity”.

<sup>37</sup> J. Derrida, *Point...*, p. 574.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.



<sup>39</sup> Derrida quotes after Littre the following etymology of the word "*folie*": "Usually one sees in this the word madness [*folie*]. But this becomes uncertain when one finds in the texts from the Middle Ages: '*foleia quae erat ante domum*', and '*domum foleyae*', and *folia Johannis Morrelli*; one suspects that this involves an alteration of the word '*feuille*' or *feuillee* [*foliage*]." (*ibidem*, p. 577).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 577-578.

An A transient moment becomes an event which the *folies*, due to their multitude, stretch in time and space. Combinatorics transforms a point, a sign of place and time, into a stretched wandering, a long-term experience and a chance to become involved in innovation. Ordinary walking along the paths of the park becomes the beginning of crossing all arrangements, the possibility of entering other, yet unfixed locations.

The seriality of the steel *folies* is complex, because on the one hand it does not disregard traditional *firmitas* through its material (similar in strength even to stone monuments of architecture), on the other hand you can walk by it freely, without the feeling of seriousness and heaviness. A walk in the face of elusive variability retained in a solid substance, however, is not just a transgressing. Once again the *maintenant* appears, this time as stopping the transgressing. The *folies* certainly cannot be counted among the hieratic signs of memory, but they are also not their simple opposite, a purely accidental and pathless dispersion of meditative concentration. Usually the motionless massiveness has been transformed into the *folies* which Derrida associates with the words denoting leaves and sheets of paper<sup>39</sup>. When even the *folies* lose their unambiguity, a wide field for otherness opens up.

Derrida's analyses required a direct question about the relationship between philosophical deconstruction and Tschumi's strategies. Reflections on the park have brought in this respect statements that the philosophical approach proper for this thinker cannot exist only in a pure, intellectual form. The metaphysical shock must be aligned with the disturbances of less metaphysical disciplines. "Critique of discourses and ideologies, concepts or texts" must have the courage to confront state institutions, civil society, bureaucracy, capital, economic mechanisms, etc.<sup>40</sup> The field of architecture, defined by Kant as the art of systems, is perfectly suited to such a confrontation, especially if one takes into account the thesis that the mechanisms of architecture inevitably are combined with orders external to this discipline. Architecture is also suitable for crossing the threshold of discursivity due to its links with art, especially that one with new paradigms. If, moreover, the notion of otherness, "other writing" and "other architecture", appears in the background of the deliberations, everything that can be covered by the term art becomes very helpful for such reflection.

The study of the overlapping of internal architecture structures with other areas of culture directs the attention to the architect's decision to make his field an area of reflection on differentiation. The study of the very beginnings of differentiation coincided with the concept of spatialization (*espacement*), which is the same as *différance*. At first Derrida was quite reserved about creating analogies beyond philosophy and undermined Tschumi's endeavours, especially vocabulary emphasizing dissociations, dispersions, disrupt-



tions and any other breakdowns, disconnections or disjunctions<sup>41</sup>. However, the park has brought what could not be found in the texts: a specific integration of disciplines and, moreover, the affirmation required in the deconstruction, albeit achieved in a new way. Yes, the system of *folies* multiplied the breakdowns or – what is closer to the language of philosophical deconstruction – differentiations, but they were collected into a work of art. The word *maintenant* used in this part of Derrida's text is appropriate to describe such a kind of maintenance of differentiations that does not obscure the idea of emphasizing the infinite divisibility of a point. Usually understood as an indivisible and single node of a network, in the park it manifests itself as each time different. Its otherness and unfinishedness precedes its appearance and position in the network of points. The disintegration of the whole was accepted, even when that disintegration was assembled into a questionable whole. Differentiation achieves dominance over its integration into the network, which is one of the weakest symbols of the set. La Villette – as Tschumi himself described it – shows disconnection, gives form to disconnection, structures and institutionalizes the singularity of separation<sup>42</sup>.

It cannot be denied that the disconnection has been demonstrated, which means that the force of integrating it into a work of art has been used; an architecture has been created that stops madness which distributes and locate it. The red points, *points de folies*, are therefore not just parts, but signals of nostalgia both for the lost forms of wholeness and for its future forms. If this were applied to the state of consciousness of the contemporary individual, it would be easy to find traces of a similar state of schizophrenia and madness. Maintaining oneself in such a state is another architectural *maintenant* transferred outside the field, or maybe conversely: pulled into it. The external and internal mechanisms overlap in this case with great accuracy. The boisterousness, explosiveness and a series of unstable entertainment of this *maintenant* are characteristic for the attractions that the park should bring, but it also has a lot in common with the dangers and fictions that saturate modern existence. The park is a political and moral advertisement of the *maintenant*, the present, which, however, does not exhaust its depicting functions. Although it was not a goal, and even aroused opposition, it cannot be denied that the work has become a story. Despite Tschumi's declaration like "non- sense / no-meaning", an impulse for interpretation has been designed<sup>43</sup>. Although each explanation will be transient, and what it will do first of all, it will draw attention to the instability contained in the *maintenant*, the primordial abyss and the abyssness.

When a given point in La Villette differs from another, then the Otherness itself makes a risky promise. Starting then from the present, the park also provides a place for an unknown future, an upcoming democracy (*la démocratie à venir*)<sup>44</sup>, and an upcoming community<sup>45</sup>. According to Derrida, this architecture, open to



<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 578.

<sup>42</sup> See B. Tschumi, *Madness and combi-native*, "Precis" 1984, no. 3: "At La Villette, it is a matter of forming, of acting out dissociation. [...] This is not without difficulty. Putting dissociation into form necessitates that the support structure (the Parc, the institution) be structured as a reassembling system. The red point of folies is the focus of this dissociated space"; as quoted in: J. Derrida, *Point...*, p. 579; cf. also E. S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Berkeley 1997, p. 316.

<sup>43</sup> B. Tschumi, *Cinégram...*, pp. VII–VIII.

<sup>44</sup> J. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx. L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*, Paris 1993, pp. 110–111; *idem*, *Politics of Friendship*, transl. G. Collins, London 1997, pp. 103–104; *idem*, *Voyous. Deux essais sur la raison*, Paris 2003, pp. 126–127. See also S. Laoureux, *L'Impossible plutôt que l'utopie. La structure temporelle aporétique de l'"à venir" dans la pensée de Derrida*, "Klêsis" 2013, no. 28, pp. 47, 55; G. Bennington, *La démocratie à Venir*, [in:] *La Démocratie à venir: Autour de Jacques Derrida*, dir. M.-L. Mallet, Paris 2004. Cf. also: H. de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, Baltimore 1999, p. 322: "the idea of democracy is seen as that which at every instant and in each single instance remains yet 'to come' (à venir). As that which at every given point in time is always yet another step ahead and can never be anticipated as such, it never reaches a full plenitude or presence (to itself) but attains instead the elusive yet no less urgent quality of infinite, albeit also infinitely finite, future (avenir)".

<sup>45</sup> The park can be treated as a place of katargesis; see G. Agamben, *Tiqun de la noche*, [in:] *idem*, *La comunità che viene*, Torino 2001, p. 93: "Inoperosità non significa inerzia, ma katargesis – cioè un'operazione in cui il come si sostituisce integralmente al che, in cui la vita senza forma e le forme senza vita coincidono in una forma di vita".



<sup>46</sup> J. Derrida, *Point...*, p. 581.

<sup>47</sup> Reflecting in a mirror or half-dream appearances are terms connected with attempts to describe the functioning of *chôra*. These types of appearances of *chôra* are presented in more detail in the following part.

the risk of an unpredictable future, is a study of the Otherness and, moreover, a consideration of the very process of emerging, of appearing of the future reality<sup>46</sup>. It is not important as a form of something already existing, but it evokes reflection on what may exist, reflecting a looming possibility<sup>47</sup>. Along with this situation, it reveals that the still impossible future belongs to the resource of the pre-existing abyss, so that coming of the unexpected, unveiled with anxiety, is a part of something that already somehow exists, but as non-existence, impossibility, absolute otherness. When among the notions describing the goal of the park concept there appeared terms such as “radical otherness”, “absolute otherness”, “impossibility” or “primordial abyss”, the question of the relationship between these terms and apophatic theology became then an issue that demanded a solution. This subject was additionally justified by the circumstances of religious problems in Derrida’s works such as *Circonfession*, the collection of essays *On the Name* or *The Gift of Death*, and the repeated juxtaposition and comparison of faith and deconstruction problems in countless authors. Among the issues characteristic for this group were works on the concept of the *chôra*, which appeared already at the beginning of Derrida’s cooperation with Peter Eisenman invited by Tschumi to design one of the gardens in the Parc de La Villette.

### **Derrida and Eisenman’s cooperation and the basic issues of the *chôra***

The general plan of the park by Tschumi allowed for a multitude of possible interventions by further authors, including the design of so-called thematic gardens. In such a broad context we should understand Eisenman’s invitation to participate in the development of the concept of La Villette. It should be remembered that the layered structure of the park was also envisaged by the competition project of Rem Koolhaas’s OMA team. Eisenman was also interested in such “geological” way of land management, which was already manifested in his earlier projects. Therefore, it can be assumed that Eisenman envisaged supplementing the system of layers assumed by Tschumi and imprinting on the whole the assumption of a certain set of elements that create a kind of another level, perhaps with the emphasis of a single fragment. The matter is not obvious, because the documentation of Eisenman’s project, in the form of drawings and models, does not reflect the whole of several years of work on it, but only one of its parts. The others stopped at the stage of purely intellectual concepts, which, however, cannot be ignored given that the park from its inception was characterized by an overgrowth of theory over materiality. In the case of Eisenman’s participation, this disproportion was intensified to such an extent that none of his ideas were even partially implemented.



To work on possible park components, Eisenman invited Derrida. Their several years of cooperation was fulfilled in the form of long discussions with the participation of the architect's collaborators and additional people invited by him. Between September 1985 and October 1987, the two main participants of the discussions met seven times in different cities in Europe and North America. In 1989, they still exchanged letters, which eventually ended their close contacts. The effect of the long process of conception was only the book *Chora L Works* containing a transcription of their conversations and a set of essays created additionally in connection with the content of the meetings held.

During each meeting, the participants presented many interesting ideas, but there was an important reason preventing their transition to the real world. The reason for this situation should be considered to include the issue of the *chôra*, which has absorbed both rational achievements and efforts to make them visible. The unclear component of the world, usually elusive, manifested itself in its so far weakly accented aspect: as an archaic nothingness, an emptiness that absorbs what is inscribed in it. Eisenman's and Derrida's park became "*chôric*" when it obscured its creators' achievements with non-existence. *Chora L Works* book is rich in numerous satisfying statements, the value of which, however, has been annihilated not only by the lack of realization, but also by their failure coded already at the level of thought. The *chôra* left its mark on its authors' choral work not as a mediation element between cognitive and sensual, but as a negation of both, the erasure of the inscription that had been made. He was similarly critical of the customary use in architecture of a scale based on human dimensions, moreover, of historically established aesthetic habits, of the principles of reflecting external content by forms of architecture, and of paying great attention to usability issues. The complex of negated traditions, wider than the Vitruvian-Albertinian features of the discipline, indicated that the presence undermined in architecture is not only its overwhelming materiality, but also its general dependence on specific, traditional assumptions or content. Such an observation leads to the conclusion that architecture is each time a realization of a certain set of theories, which indicates that its main components are intellectual values that precede reality. This statement not only blurs the difference between philosophy and physical structure, but also brings the deconstructive thought that examines the fundamentals of philosophy closer to the critical position adopted by Eisenman in relation to the roots of architecture. Derrida's research revealing the instability of historically accepted certainties of philosophy therefore has points in common with the activity of Eisenman violating the *arché* of architecture.

The inclusion of the complex issue of *chôra* in the park design process seems poorly justified, but the analysis of the record of the





<sup>48</sup> J. Derrida [et al.], *Transcript One*, New York, September 17, 1985, [in:] *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, ed. J. Kipnis, T. Leeser, New York 1997.

first conversation, which took place on 17 September 1985 in New York, may change this judgment<sup>48</sup>. At that time, Eisenman clearly declared that his aim was always to culminate the design process with the erection of a specific object. Such a position clearly emphasized his distinctiveness as an architect. Simultaneously, the adverb which together with the pronoun “neither..., nor ...”, are exceptionally often used in the language of the philosophy of deconstruction, he has described his more specific position in the field of construction recalling that the traditional and seemingly obvious characteristics of his discipline, including paying too much attention to the material presence of buildings, arouses his resistance.

So who were the two main participants of the talks? Which disciplines they represented since Derrida said: “I’ve always been an architect”, while Eisenman repeatedly declared his interest in and inspiration from Derrida’s concepts? At the same time, each of them declared with conviction: “I’m not an architect”. Statements of this kind revealed a lack of original, single understanding of the word “architecture” and a constant tension between its metaphorical value, historical precision and critical approach. Derrida, when claiming that his writing also has an architectural dimension, probably meant the creation of intellectual constructions, and it indicates that he adopted – like Kant – the view that architecture is the art of systems. At the same time, he could say with equal conviction that he is not an architect and has no competence in this area, because in this case architecture was mentioned as the art of erecting specific buildings. So also Eisenman had reason to say that he is not an architect, as his activity was a criticism of the principles of architecture and the buildings he erected constituted themselves in the sphere of theory. Like the philosopher, he built views whose materiality, like the materiality of writing, was largely secondary to the unreality of the concept itself. The statements of both interlocutors opened the problem of translating ideas into the sensual world, which was an important part of the discussion about the *chôra*. Therefore, they talked about the problem of the *chôra* before they started a separate discussion on it. Perhaps they also talked over the problem even before the meeting took place between them. Eisenman was convinced of this and, as an argument, recalled his project *Romeo and Juliet* and the accompanying essay *Moving Arrows, Eros and Other Errors*, where the story, referring to the castles in Montecchio (in the province of Vicenza) and then transferred to Verona, was treated as the basis of an urban plan. In this way fiction dictated the solutions to architecture and became something like “textual architecture”, adapted to be read in a certain place. The statements of Eisenman and Derrida suggested that architecture so shifted into unreality, and which can be read as a literary work, is similar to the *chôra*, which may be understood as a dream, but also as a prophetic vision, a poetic dream or the work of a reflective artist.



The direct introduction of the purely philosophical issue of the *chôra* to the discussion was not preceded by any justification. The philosopher stated that he had no ideas related to park designing and when Tschumi proposed cooperation, he was in the course of writing a text, inspired by the writings of Jean-Pierre Vernant, analysing the paragraphs from *Timaeus* devoted to the *chôra*. During the first conversation he repeatedly returned to characterizing the *chôra*'s historical and philosophical subject matter. He recalled that the Platonic dialogue was devoted to the birth and organization of the world. According to its content, the Cosmos emerged when the Demiurge watched the paradigms, the unchangeable forms that are eternal and preceded his own existence. Looking closely at them, he labelled them with names, which made them real. In their essence, however, they were an imitation, representation or reflection of *eidos*. Plato, said Derrida, introduced however the third element of the world (*triton genos*), which is neither an unchangeable idea, nor a rational imitation of it, but a place where the transition from the perfect world to the real world took place. In order to explain this space, the Greek thinker used metaphors of mother, matrix, or nurse taking care of babies. The shift of the language of description to less accurate forms, comparisons related to human life, aroused distance in Plato's readers and commentators and were usually ignored. Derrida expressed reservations about the possibility of full separation of metaphorical vocabulary and more rationalised descriptions. The problem with the *chôra* was, to some extent, that there was no proper vocabulary to talk about the place where paradigms have been imprinted. It is available to be recognized as if in a dream, because it does not reflect anything, but is a "place" of reflection. It "is" not, however, in any way: it is not a place nor emptiness, nor it is in time. To Derrida's arguments it must be added here that it was Aristotle, contrary to Plato, who simplified the *chôra* and by linking it with matter (*hyle*) made it a comprehensible place (*topos*). In Derrida's opinion, however, the *chôra* is neither comprehensible nor a place.



<sup>49</sup> J. Derrida [et al.], *op. cit.*, s. 10.

*Chôra* is the spacing which is the condition for everything to take place, for everything to be inscribed. [...] It is the place where everything is received as at imprint. I insist on the fact on this non-anthropomorphism of *chôra*. Why? Because *chôra* looks as though it were giving something, "giving" place. In French we say *donner lieu*: the place for receiving or for giving. *Chôra* receives everything or gives place to everything, yet Plato insist that in fact it has to be a virgin place, and that it has to be totally foreign, totally exterior to anything that it receives. [...] It remains foreign to the imprint it receives; so, in a sense, it does not receive anything – it does not receive what receives nor does it give what it gives. Everything inscribed in it erases itself immediately, while remaining in it. It is thus an impossible surface – it is not even a place, because it has no depth<sup>49</sup>.



<sup>50</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*; as quoted in: E. Bianchi, *Receptable/Chôra: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato's Timaeus*, "Hypatia" 2006, no. 21, pp. 133–134.

<sup>51</sup> J. Derrida [et al.], *op. cit.*, p. 10.

Derrida referred to yet another feature of the *chôra*, which is its nonrepresentability. Although the *chôra* could have been brought closer to being comprehended by a set of negations, such a procedure was not, however, similar to a proper negative theology, because the *chôra* does not have theological or sacral significance. A dispute has developed among theologians and religious scholars as to whether it is God or divinity, but for Derrida it was unquestionable that the *chôra* is atheological. The *chôra* lacked everything, including the possibility of being comprehended, grasped in the language or presented, which did not prevent the participants' attempts to transfer the *chôra* to the area of metaphoricity or figurativeness. Contrary to his own assumptions, Derrida proposed that the *chôra*, as something reflected and erased at the same time, should be shown through forms representing paradigms that would cast shadows on the sand or reflect in the water. Jeffrey Kipnis, one of the debaters, considered the visualization of the *chôra* to be a return to anthropocentrism and suggested that the presence of the *chôra*'s absence could be depicted rather. Such a programme turned out to be so demanding that it was impossible to carry out. The work of this shape was supposed to refer to a fragment from *Timaeus* (52d–53a), where it is said that

The nurse of becoming was watered and fired and received the shapes [*morpha*] of earth and air, and undergoing [*paschousan*] all the other affections [*pathe*] that accompany them, appeared both manifold, and filled throughout with powers [*dunamia*] neither similar nor balanced, with no part of itself in equilibrium, but every part oscillating unevenly. She/it was shaken by these, and she/it moreover shook them in turn. These was shaken by these, and she/it moreover shook them in turn. These moving things were forever borne this way and that, and dispersed, just like that which is shaken and winnowed by baskets [*plokanon*] and other instruments [*organon*] for cleaning corn: the solid and heavy are borne one way, and the loose and light settle in another place<sup>50</sup>.

It was this metaphor of sieve that prompted Derrida to come up with the idea of placing on the designed site a diagonally positioned structure resembling a lyre [il. 11]. The "sieving" of forces inside the *chôra* contributed to their separation and this original articulation was an element of the creation of Cosmos. Nevertheless, what is created does not leave its imprint in the *chôra*, because "[i]t remains foreign to the imprint it receives; so, in a sense, it does not receive anything – it does not receive what receives nor does it give what it gives. Everything inscribed in it erases itself immediately, while remaining in it"<sup>51</sup>.

The design process became "chôric" because it accepted and rejected all concepts, leaving their blurred traces in the records of conversations, but not becoming permanent in the area of reasonableness or visibility. The park would have been "choric" even if the

ideas had been put into practice, because, by the nature of the talks about it, became unreal; its space opened up radically to constant acceptance and annihilation. The garden left being a mere architecture or a part of the city and became a state of fiction, which can only be read if you are unconscious of it. “Reading” is, therefore, recording through use – similar to the potential reading of the plan in the *Romeo and Juliet* project.

An extended version of Derrida’s statement became a separate part of *Chora L Works*<sup>52</sup>. The essay *Khôra*, before it was included there, in its first version was published in 1987 in the work *Poikilia. Études offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant*<sup>53</sup> and was a kind of tribute to this outstanding expert on Greek thought. Before handing it over to his interlocutors, Derrida warned that the text “has nothing to do with architecture”<sup>54</sup>, but Kipnis considered that seeking incentives for architecture only where the statements clearly refer to it could be a kind of trap<sup>55</sup>. In his opinion, it would be more fruitful to take into account thoughts that say nothing about architecture. Using this assumption, he later prepared an essay entitled *Twisting the Separatrix*, which is a description of Eisenman’s and Derrida’s cooperation and makes use of the philosopher’s considerations contained in *Khôra*. The voice of the French thinker contained a rich set of views on how to describe reality, which can be helpful in further analysis of the park and its status as evasive as the *chôra* itself.

*Khôra* began with a quote from Vernant’s *Raisons du mythe* saying that:

Thus myth puts in play a form logic which could be called – in contrast to the logic of noncontradiction of the philosophers – a logic of the ambiguous, of the equivocal, of polarity. How can one formulate, or even formalize, these see-saw operations, which flip any term into its opposite whilst at the same time keeping them both apart, from another point of view? The mythologist was left with drawing up, in conclusion, this statement of deficit, and to turn to linguists, logicians, mathematicians, that they might supply him with the tool he lacked: the structural model of a logic which would not be that binarity, of the yes or no, a logic other than the logic of the logos<sup>56</sup>.

In Derrida’s view, these opinions make a good introduction to the deliberations on the *chôra*, since in all its descriptions it evades the logic of noncontradiction of which Vernant wrote. As he further wrote, the logic that can be applied to the *chôra* is different from the mere logic of logos and in general announces Otherness. The question posed in *Timaeus* allows for the development of Vernant’s position because the *chôra* belongs neither to the world of ideas nor to the real world, and through these “neither this nor that”, as a *triton genos*, creates a specific logic of exclusion. The problem, however, lies in the fact that this distinctiveness of the *chôra* is nothing more than a fiction, only a view, and not something that can be stated in



<sup>52</sup> *Idem*, *Chora*, transl. I. McCloud, [in:] *Chora L...*

<sup>53</sup> *Idem*, *Khôra*, [in:] *Poikilia. Études offertes à Jean-Pierre Vernant*, ed. Centre de recherches comparées sur les sociétés anciennes, Paris 1987.

<sup>54</sup> J. Derrida [et al.], *op. cit.*, p. 13 (Derrida’s statement).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem* (Kipnis’s statement).

<sup>56</sup> J.-P. Vernant, *Raisons du mythe*, [in:] *idem*, *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne*, Paris 1974, p. 250; as quoted in: J. Derrida, *Khôra*, transl. I. McLeod, [w:] *idem*, *On the Name*, ed. T. Dutoit, Stanford 1995, p. 88. See also J.-P. Vernant, *Du mythe à la raison. La formation de la pensée positive dans la Grèce archaïque*, “Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations” 1957, no. 2.



<sup>57</sup> J. Derrida, *Khôra*, s. 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 96.

an obvious way. Although Derrida would refrain from emphasizing this issue, one could be under the illusion that the *chôra* is somehow “ideological” (since we accept the idea of the *chôra*) and at the same time perhaps also “real” (since we can see imitations of itself recorded in its unreality). As he put it: “One cannot even say of it that it is *neither* this *nor* that or that it is *both* this *and* that”<sup>57</sup>. It is not enough to recall that *khôra* name neither this nor that, or, that *khôra* says this and that<sup>58</sup>. It would thus belong to another specific reasoning – the logic of participation, of being “both this and that” at the same time. Revealing itself in two ways, it would take part in both the logic of exclusion and the logic of participation, or rather, it would participate neither in one nor in the other and, as a stubbornly belonging to the “third type”, it would once again occupy a place between one scheme and the other? Perhaps, being “in-between”, it would not evenly distribute it and even disturb the very oscillation of “being in-between”. *Triton genos* would therefore not exhaust the number of genera.

The separation between the two logics seems to result from the historically shaped custom of separation, from the limitations created by rhetoric and from the inability to create expressions beyond a certain metaphysical tradition. Is it only the *chôra* that baffles our ability to name? Could we not admit that the skill to create names has adopted certain customs and does not want to open up to others, or to Other? This is very possible. Practical and everyday reasons prefer simple logic, which fails in every more difficult matter. The open structure of the Parc de La Villette, suspended between the ideological values of its theoretical planning and the real skeleton grown into practical components, can be described endlessly, without the possibility of closing it into the usual logic of being only this, or only that one.

Derrida’s thought on the *chôra* initially focused on emphasizing its distinct status between the eidos and the created being, which opened the question of the *chôra*’s specific way of being. For the *chôra* “is” in a very special way, because, being neither a being nor something, it is nothing neither. It “is” not, because it does not belong to any of the two recognizable types of being. “*Khôra* is neither sensible nor intelligible. But what *there is* (*il y a*), there, is not”<sup>59</sup>. Nor “is” it in the manner in which negative theology describes God, because this kind of thought speaks of a being of negative qualities, while *chôra* is not a being, is not a thing and is not a place (in the sense of Aristotle). It is therefore clear that the problem of the *chôra* is a problem of description. When interpreting the *chôra*, certain properties are attributed to it, such as amorphism, but these are properties of a being, so they are acceptable in the real world, but cannot be accepted by it as its property. They belong to a world of thoughts that can be recorded somewhere, but are not the same as that “somewhere”, a place/non-place of recording. The *chôra* accepts what it receives





with the definition of a certain its property, but it is still not itself, so it does not keep what has been attributed to it. This situation of attempting to describe the *chôra*, indicates that its characteristic is to force us to interpret it, and its interpretations are always accepted, then rejected, and again lead us to further explanations. They force us to return to a certain starting point, which precedes every possible beginning of reflection on it. The *chôra* precedes every beginning. “The *khôra* is anachronistic; it “is” the anachrony within being, or better: the anachrony of being. It anachronizes being”<sup>60</sup>. Anachronizes the beginning of every being and its description. It goes beyond description and intelligibility.

For the first time the situation of preceding the beginning was described by Plato himself, who long after he characterized the origin of the real world, unexpectedly in the middle of the dialogue *Timaeus* returned to the history of the reflection of ideas by the Demiurge and wrote the history of this activity again, but now including the place (*chôra*) where the cosmos was recorded<sup>61</sup>. The *chôra*, being neither eternal as ideas, nor historical as their imitations, was as if earlier, before time and before history. It must be taken into account, but only after time has come with the transition from *eidos* to imitation. It is only thanks to that what is created, like the language which reflects the ideal being, that can be activated what is preceding even in relation to the un-created being. The *chôra* has its own history in its interpretations, but their character, which has something of the *chôra* itself, contributes to the fact that not only they are created endlessly, but they do not have their beginning. The beginning is incomparably younger, later and secondary to the *chôra*.

Is the *chôra* completely indescribable, then? Or is it the opposite: the *chôra* is a mere tendency to describe? In this respect Plato presents a very convincing interpretation assuming that since eternal and created being, reasonableness and sensuality, logos and mythos are alien to the *chôra*, it can only be understood in short-lived euphorias, through dreams (*oneiropoloumen*, *Timaeus*, 52b), or prophecies. Thinking that leads to it is complex, of bastard origin, with no logic, with no beginning (father), but also with no closing. *Logismo notho* (*Timaeus*, 52b<sup>62</sup>) leading to the *chôra* is a hybrid of intuition and reasoning (*raisonnement hybride*<sup>63</sup>), bastard reasoning<sup>64</sup>, that defies all logic, unlawful usurpations of commentators and nowadays also deconstructive thinking or so-called “misreading” as well.

The *Chôra* in *Timaeus* was described with the help of numerous metaphors. Derrida put forward the thesis that the figure of Socrates plays an analogous role in the dialogue. The political character of the cycle of dialogues, of which *Timaeus* was a part, also escaped the attention of the previous interpreters. Consequently, it can be assumed that deliberations on the *chôra* are combined with views on *polis* – a political place. Socrates’ place in the “architecture of dialogues”



<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> The topic of returning to another beginning was also the subject of J. Sallis’s interest; see *idem*, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s „Timaeus”*, Bloomington 1999, pp. 13, 91–97.

<sup>62</sup> See <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/physics/plato-timaeus/space.asp?pg=4> (access date: 2 XII 2018): Plato, *Timaeus*, 52b: „ἔδραν δὲ παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πᾶσιν, αὐτὸ δὲ μετ’ ἀναισθησίας ἀπτόν λογισμῷ τινι νόθῳ, μόγις πιστόν, πρὸς ὃ δὴ καὶ ὀνειροπολοῦμεν βλέποντες καὶ φάμεν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι που τὸ ὄν ἅπαν ἐν τινι τόπῳ καὶ κατέχον χώραν τινά, τὸ δὲ μήτ’ ἐν γῇ μήτε που κατ’ οὐρανὸν οὐδὲν εἶναι”.

<sup>63</sup> See Platon, *Timée – Critias*, transl. A. Rivaud, Paris 1985, p. 171: “Enfin il y a toujours un troisième genre, celui où le lieu: il ne peut mouirir et fournit un emplacement à tous les objets qui naissent. Lui-même, il n’est perceptible que grâce à une sorte de raisonnement hybride que n’accompagne point la sensation: à peine peut-on y croire”.

<sup>64</sup> See *idem*, *The Timaeus of Plato*, ed. R. D. Archer-Hind, London – New York 1888, pp. 183–185 (with commentary): “And the third kind is space everlasting, admitting not destruction, but affording place for all things that come into being, itself apprehensible without sensation by a sort bastard reasoning, hardly master of belief”.



<sup>65</sup> J. Derrida, *Khôra...*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 111.

is related to the demand (necessity) that an ideally performed city should become a living, warlike, conflicting one. The transition from one form of policies to another requires a “vessel” (*dechomenon*) or a place that takes the desired form of community. This vessel is undoubtedly Socrates, a fictitious figure who, in dialogue, makes himself even more unreal.

There are two types of people wandering through *polis*. On the one hand there are philosophers and politicians. They create the *logos* that give meaning to the place, shape the community and organize the city. On the other hand, a kind of sophists and poets are also a part of the city. They, apart from people of word and deed, can be characterized as people of image and appearances, or as people not bound by the order of the place, who occupy it, but without adopting the rights and obligations that create it. Their disconnection with the area of community creates a contrast between what is controlled and what is not included in the law.

For the adopted logic of dialogue and an attempt to revive the city, it was necessary for its formulas to be reflected somewhere. To begin with, at least in speech. To make this happen, someone had to become a kind, well-disposed listener. Such a role in the conversation was taken on by Socrates. He could not be an active speaker, but it was also not advisable that he received the words of others indifferently. Since the city could consist only of those who created it and those who created images of life, Socrates had to occupy a separate position. Although he stated that when it came to the development of certain theoretical problems of *polis*, he felt a little like poets, yet he did not completely equate himself with them<sup>65</sup>. He took the position of a person of a “third genus”. Reflections on the *polis* have reached the point where it has become necessary for the interlocutors to be able to describe only a purely intellectual city in practical situations. Someone, however, should give a place to this semi-animated city. This is what Socrates was needed for. The position adopted by him deprived him of the role of a man of a word or deed, but also did not make him just a cunning imitator.

“Socrates is not *khôra*, but he would look a lot like it/her if it/she were someone or something”<sup>66</sup>. The sage withdrew from the circle of active interlocutors, gave a vote to the other participants of the exchange of views, made room for broadening the field of reflection, but surprisingly he was still the ruler of the dialogue. It was only by listening that he forced himself to express himself, and he did so somehow inexorably or even commandingly. Socrates made himself an all-encompassing vessel, which did not prevent this vessel from being more than an empty place to be filled. An infinitely open container of words and events organized them as valuable gifts or received them as an inn receives important visitors. Perhaps it was thanks to him they not only became valuable and important, but also became at all. Socrates, by giving the place, became someone nec-

essary and irreplaceable. The obligation to speak to which he has contributed can be defined in many ways, but it will always hide the ultimate necessity (ἀνάγκη) going beyond any name and revealing that the chôra that precedes any beginning is only its agnomen.

The topic of the *chôra* apparently accidentally entered into the discussion on the shape of the Parc de La Villette. There were, however, numerous reasons why its introduction by Derrida did not raise objections in the group of people gathered by Eisenman. The main one was the fact that the initial structure adopted by Tschumi was unprecedentedly “open” or “socrato-chôric”<sup>67</sup>. It was not made up of components such as a system of perpendicularly intersecting avenues along which park buildings would be situated, and did not present any predetermined content, but rather made room for freely scattered objects of various purposes. Not being a place of production of *ethnos* or *genos*, it did much to bring together all random users into an unusual community. Such a programme of the park prompts one to notice that, just like the *chôra* (or Socrates, who was analogous to it), it was a “non-place”, it was atopic. It was not apolitical, however, although the *polis* he referred to was far from the Platonic ideals of far-reaching order and rationality. Its characteristic *logos* was not true or even probable, because instead of the truth appropriate for a traditional political community, it was shifted towards unreality, a phantom or a dream of a paradoxical dispersed community.



<sup>67</sup> T. Rickert, *Toward the Chôra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention*, „Philosophy and Rhetoric” 2007, no. 3, p. 265; *Chora L...*, pp. 166–167.

#### Słowa kluczowe

projekt Parku de La Villette, koncepcja *chôry*, filozofia Jacques’a Derridy, architektura i teoria Bernarda Tschumiego

#### Keywords

project of the Parc de La Villette, concept of *chôra*, philosophy of Jacques Derrida, architecture and theory of Bernard Tschumi

#### References

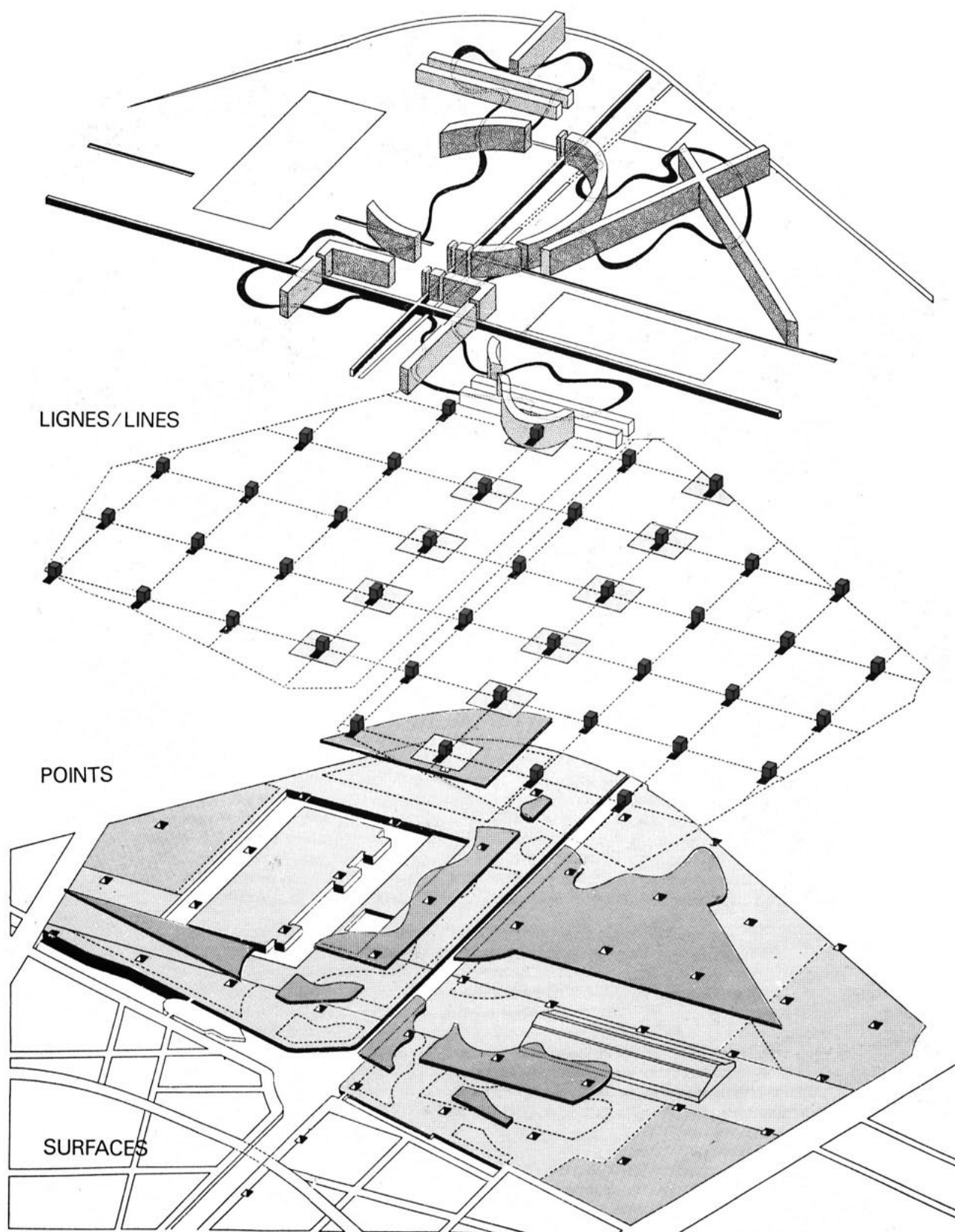
1. **Derrida Jacques**, *Chora*, transl. I. McCloud, [in:] *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, ed. J. Kipnis, T. Leaser, New York 1997.
2. **Derrida Jacques**, *Point de folie – Maintenant l’architecture*, [in:] **B. Tschumi**, *La Case Vide: La Villette 1985*, London 1986.
3. **Derrida Jacques [et al.]**, *Transcript One, New York, September 17, 1985*, [in:] *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, ed. J. Kipnis, T. Leaser, New York 1997.
4. **Tschumi Bernard**, *Cinégram Folie: Le Parc de la Villette. Paris, Nineteenth Arrondissement*, Princeton 1987.
5. **Tschumi Bernard**, *La Case Vide: La Villette 1985*, London 1986.
6. **Tschumi Bernard**, *Parc de la Villette, Paris*, [in:] *Deconstruction in Architecture*, „An Architectural Design Profile” 72, London 1988 ; ed. A. C. Papadakis, London 1988.

---

**Dr. habil. Cezary Was, wascezar@gmail.com**

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław. Curator of the Museum of Architecture. Author of the books: *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej* (*Antinomies of the contemporary sacred architecture*, 2008), *Architektura a dekonstrukcja. Przypadek Petera Eisenmana i Bernarda Tschumiego* (*Architecture and deconstruction. The case of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi*, 2015) and dozens of articles on phenomena of the ancient and modern culture.





THE SUPERIMPOSITION OF THE THREE SYSTEMS (POINTS, LINES, SURFACES) CREATES THE PARK AS IT GENERATES A SERIES OF CALCULATED TENSIONS WHICH REINFORCE THE DYNAMISM OF THE PLACE. EACH OF THE THREE SYSTEMS DISPLAYS ITS OWN LOGIC AND INDEPENDENCE



# The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher.

## The Parc de La Villette in Paris in the context of philosophy of *chôra*

### Part II

Cezary Wąs

University of Wrocław

#### *Chôra* and the “Socratic-choric” park in contemporary thought

*Timaeus*, as it discussed the rudimentary issues of world origin, was – from Antiquity to Renaissance – the most frequently commented work by Plato<sup>1</sup>. Although not without reservation, it can be said that the interpretation adopted by Aristotle on the question of the *chôra* has been characterised by simplification and it is only today that there is a return to the difficulties the “location” of the *chôra* brings to the philosophy. Since the work of Julia Kristeva<sup>2</sup>, through the statements of Jacques Derrida, John Sallis, to the articles of Thomas Rickert, Maria Margaroni<sup>3</sup>, Nicoletta Isar<sup>4</sup> or Louise Burchill<sup>5</sup>, to name but a few, it can be said that we are currently dealing with a fascination with the issue of the *chôra* not only among philosophers, but also researchers of rhetoric, religion, feminism<sup>6</sup>, or architecture<sup>7</sup> (also the park one<sup>8</sup>). The works of these authors have been interlinked and have an impact on the promotion of the explanations that can be applied to the Parc de La Villette.

In considerations of the *chôra* issue, no humanistic field provides unequivocal information, an exemplification of which can be found in research on the earliest uses of the word, its origin or meaning. Historians of ancient literature point out that the *chôra*, before its understanding became similar to the notion of *topos*, could have

il. 1 B. Tschumi, *The Superposition of The Three Systems (Points, Lines, Surfaces)*, after: *idem*, *Cinegram Folie. Le Parc de la Villette*, Princeton 1988, p. 3



<sup>1</sup> See G. S. Claghorn, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's „Timaeus”*, The Hague 1954, pp. 1-2; A. F. Ashbaugh, *Plato's Theory of Explanation: A Study of the Cosmological Account in the Timaeus*, Albany [New York] 1988, p. 1; as cit. in: T. Rickert, *Toward the Chôra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention*, „Philosophy and Rhetoric” 2007, nr 3, pp. 258, 270. See also J. Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's „Timaeus”*, Bloomington 1999., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> J. Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique. L'avant-garde a la fin du XIXe siècle. Lautréamont et Mallarme*, Paris 1974.

<sup>3</sup> M. Margaroni, “The Lost Foundation”: Kristeva's Chora and Its Ambiguous Legacy, „Hypatia. A Journal of Feminist Philosophy” 2005, no. 1.

<sup>4</sup> N. Isar, *Chôra: Tracing the Presence*, “Review of European Studies” 2009, no. 1;



*eadem*, *Chorography – a Space for Choreographic Inspiration*, "Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov" 2009, no. 2.

<sup>5</sup> L. Burchill, *In-Between "Spacing" and the "Chôra" in Derrida: A Pre-Originary Medium?*, [in:] *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Arts, Politics*, ed. H. Oosterling, E. Plonowska Ziarek, Lanham 2011.

<sup>6</sup> See E. Bianchi, *Receptacle/Chôra: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato's Timaeus*, "Hypatia" 2006, no. 4.

<sup>7</sup> See A. Pérez-Gómez, *Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation*, [in:] *Chora. Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, vol. 1, ed. A. Pérez-Gómez, S. Parcell, Montreal 1994.

<sup>8</sup> See B. Weltman-Aron, *Rhizome and Khôra: Designing Garden with Deleuze and Derrida*, "Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française" 2005, no. 2.

<sup>9</sup> T. Rickert, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>10</sup> Όμηρου Ίλιας. *The Iliad of Homer*, ed. W. Trollope, London 1847, pp. 536–537.

<sup>11</sup> I. K. McEwen, *Socrates' Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings*, Cambridge [Massachusetts] 1993, pp. 62–63; as cit. in: T. Rickert, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>12</sup> T. Rickert, *op. cit.*, pp. 254–255.

meant a city, country, region, social position or a soldier's post. Rickert, who summarized the findings in this respect, drew attention to the observations of Indra Kagis McEwen regarding the relationship of the *chôra* to the words "*choron*" and "*choros*"<sup>9</sup>. In the XVIII book of *Iliad* these two words mean both dance and dance platform. As the most famous of the ancient poet's phrases reports, among the numerous performances carved by Hephaestus on the shield of Achilles there was a dance scene of a group of young girls and young boys on the dance floor:

590

ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποικίλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυῖεις,  
τῷ ἴκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ  
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.  
ἔνθα μὲν ἡίθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἄλφεσίβοιοι  
ὀρχεῦντ' ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χεῖρας ἔχοντες.

595

τῶν δ' αἶ μὲν λεπτὰς ὀθόνας ἔχον, οἱ δὲ χιτῶνας  
εἶτα' ἐννῆνιτους, ἦκα στίλβοντα ἐλαίῳ·  
καὶ ῥ' αἶ μὲν καλὰς στεφάνας ἔχον, οἱ δὲ μαχαίρας  
εἶχον χρυσείας ἐξ ἀργυρέων τελαμώνων.  
οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν θρέζασκον ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι

600

ῥεῖα μάλ', ὥς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν  
ἐζόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἶ κε θέῃσιν·  
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ θρέζασκον ἐπὶ στίχας ἀλλήλοισι.  
πολλὸς δ' ἰμερόεντα χορὸν περιστάθ' ὄμιλος  
τερπόμενοι·

605

δοιῶ δὲ κυβιστητῆρε κατ' αὐτοὺς  
μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες ἐδίνεον κατὰ μέσσους<sup>10</sup>.

In each case of using the word "*χορὸν*" (v. 590 and 604), it occurs in a different sense, and following McEwen's postulates, it can be assumed that in each case a specific term "place" conditioned the actions that happened there<sup>11</sup>. The completion of the word by the associations connected with it influenced the users of a "place". The author's study suggests that the *chôra* is a form of pre-verbal and pre-architectonic space foreshadowing the appearance of the word, place and activities. The movement contained in it cannot be overlooked either. Rickert, discussing McEwen's and Sallis's findings, drew attention to the specific circulation or interweaving of what constitutes a *polis* and its surroundings (described as a territory, *chôra*<sup>12</sup>). The limited space of a *polis* requires crossing someone's closure and

almost simultaneously returning to the inside of their circumference, which together is like weaving a city, but also has an analogy in the exchange that takes place between dance and its location. In both situations we also have to do with a certain intermediate space, which makes a described place and activity in it related to each other and at the same time separates one from the other. As a consequence, the discursive structure is crossed by the architectural one, and both are then torn apart by activity in their area. As time passes, the relationships with them change constantly and only the inability to determine them remains. The final non-determination appears to be a characteristic of the *chôra*. The troublesome breakdown requires a return to its root cause and forgetting that the re-establishment of the beginning will conceal the impossibility contained in it. The tradition in this sequence of events is a concealment that the desired beginning can only be an effect of memory action, a rhetorical trick, but never a reality. The dancing circulation between necessity and impossibility transforms all reality into a fiction that characterizes a work of art.

There is no other than a linguistic explanation of the source of this circulation, i.e. the movement in the *chôra*. Probably because there is no other movement than in a story. One of them, although historically speaking not the first one, was provided by Plato in the earlier quoted fragment of *Timaeus* (52d–53a)<sup>13</sup>. It shows that the *chôra* is filled with potencies that take the forms of the main elements. It is their differentiation that contributes to the movement within the *chôra* (*dynamis*). Shaken by them, the *chôra* absorbs these movements and itself shakes – like a sieve for husking grain – the separating elements. The increased movement causes a temporal separation and structuring of the future components of the cosmos and, as Margaroni puts it, introduces “primary distinctions between the similar and the dissimilar”<sup>14</sup>.

The ordinary activities of Ancient Greek agrarian culture were perhaps something more than accidental sources for narratives about the origins of the cosmos or the origins in general<sup>15</sup>. For statements in the spirit of materialism, they could be their only determining point of reference. Isar, basing on Anthony Bryer’s study<sup>16</sup>, emphasized that the threshing on compacted soil was a determinant of a specific period in the cycle of agricultural activities, a time of liberation from a certain tension and as if a festive one, with which the dance on the threshing floor was inseparably connected. Bryer’s words inserted in her article stating that the round threshing floor under the open sky is as old as dancing on it during the harvest were an introduction to the thesis that the Greek word “*choros*” was connected not only with the dance of people, but more commonly with a specifically circular and ordered movement, the manifestation of which could also be the dance of stars (*choros astron*) or the dance of bees (*choros meliton*). The word “*choros*” in the meaning of the ground for dance would



<sup>13</sup> See Plato, *Timaeus*, <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/physics/plato-timaeus/space.asp?pg=5> (access date: 1 III 2019): “[52d] Οὗτος μὲν οὖν δὴ παρὰ τῆς ἐμῆς μῆφου λογισθεὶς ἐν κεφαλῇ δεδόσθω λόγος, ὃν τε καὶ χώραν καὶ γενέσθαι εἶναι, τρία τριχῇ, καὶ πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι τὴν δὲ δὴ γενέσεως τιθήνην ὑγραινόμενῃ καὶ πυρουμενῇ καὶ τὰς γῆς τε καὶ ἀέρος μορφὰς δεχομένην, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτοις πάθῃ συνέπεται πάσχουσιν. [52e] παντοδαπὴν μὲν ἰδεῖν φαίνεσθαι, διὰ δὲ τὸ μῆθ’ ὁμοίων δυνάμεων μήτε ἰσορρόπων ἐμπύμπλασθαι κατ’ οὐδὲν αὐτῆς ἰσορροπεῖν, ἀλλ’ ἀνωμάλως πάντῃ ταλαντομένην σείεσθαι μὲν ὑπ’ ἐκείνων ἀπτήν, κινουμένην αὐτῆς οἷον ὄργανου σεισμὸν παρέχοντος, τὰ μὲν ἀνομοιότατα πλείστον αὐτὰ ἀφ’ αὐτῶν ὀρίζειν, τὰ δὲ ὁμοιότατα μάλιστα εἰς ταύτῃ συνωθεῖν, διὸ δὴ καὶ χώραν ταῦτα ἄλλα ἄλλη ἴσχειν, πρὶν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐξ αὐτῶν διακοσμηθὲν γενέσθαι. καὶ τὸ μὲν δὴ πρὸ τούτου πάντα ταῦτ’ εἶχεν ἀλόγως καὶ ἀμέτρως”.

<sup>14</sup> See M. Margaroni, *op. cit.*, p. 91: „Finally, the motility of the *chôra* is associated to a winnowing process in the course of which a provisional structuring of the four constitutive elements of the cosmos takes place, one involving the introduction of primary distinctions between the similar and the dissimilar”.

<sup>15</sup> See N. Isar, *Chôra...*, p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> A. Bryer, *The Means of Agricultural Production: Muscles and Tools*, [in:] *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. E. Laiu–Thōmadakē, Ch. Th. Bo-uras, Washington 2002, p. 109; as cit. in: N. Isar, *Chôra...*, p. 41.





<sup>17</sup> N. Isar, *op. cit.*, pp. 41–42.

<sup>18</sup> See Plato, *Cratylus*, v. 402a, [in:] *Dialogues of Plato*, transl. B. Jowett, wyd. 2, Oxford 1875, s. 223–224: “Those again who read *ὥσις* seem to have inclined to the opinion of Heraclitus, that all things flow and nothing stands; with them the pushing principle (*ὠθοῦν*) is the cause and ruling power of all things, and is therefore rightly called *ὥσις*. See also J. Sallis, *op. cit.*, p. 118; N. Isar, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> As cit. in: J. Sallis, *op. cit.*, p. 118; N. Isar, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup> J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, transl. M. Waller, introd. L. S. Rodiez, New York 1984; see also J. Williams, *Understanding Poststructuralism*, Chesham 2005, p. 133.

thus gain certain shades referring to the circular shape of the threshing floor, the dance movement on it and the singing people forming the choir<sup>17</sup>.

Sallis’s philological analyses indicated a possible combination of the *chôra* and the verb “*choreo*” (“*χωρέω*”) referring to going forward, being in motion or flow. In this sense, the verb appears in the opinion of Heraclitus questioning the possibility of immobility in the world and proclaiming that everything flows (“*panta chorei*”). Plato in the dialogue *Cratylus* spoke using the voice of Socrates:

*Λέει κάποιον ο Ηράκλειτος ότι πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει, καὶ παρομοιάζοντας τὰ υπάρχοντα πράγματα με τὴ ροή ενός ποταμοῦ λέει ότι δεν μπορείς να μπεις στο ίδιο ποτάμι δυο φορές*<sup>18</sup>.

Sallis’s work also points to the use of the verb “*choreo*” to describe withdrawal, giving or making a place, which results in the generation of a special kind of space. For this understanding of the verb “*choreo*” one can find an example in the *Homeric Hymns*, where “*γαῖα δ’ ἔνερθε χώρησεν*” (*Εἰς Δημήτραν*, v. 429/430)<sup>19</sup>. The largely hidden accumulation of movement in the *chôra*, discovered through the study of related words, leads to the preliminary conclusion that the place in which the *chôra* will manifest itself in its features will always be a space not so much of location and fixation, but rather of change and introduction. The Parc de la Villette, associated with the *chôra* for this reason, can be understood as a place for arriving and arrivals, whose strangeness exceeds the usual hope of unpredictable otherness. The park would locate a change towards a radical distribution of democracy and dispersal of the community beyond the expectations of its current participants, thus posing a risk of absorbing the adopted structure of social relations by emptiness and nothingness, but in this way it would trigger the need to launch the renewal process. As it has already been noted, the return to the new beginning is inscribed in the mechanism of the *chôra*’s operation, which leads to the assumption that it is similarly inscribed in the mechanism of the park’s operation. Justification of the view that a choric park produces, by means of the forces of art, a political revolution (upheaval and return) requires the submission of many more explanations.

### Semiotic *chôra* in the thought of Julia Kristeva

Questions related to the concept of the *chôra* and the combination of some of the insights gained in this respect with the problems of art and politics occurred much earlier than during the design of the Parc de La Villette. The work of Julia Kristeva *La Révolution du langage poétique*, which 10 years after its French edition was translated and published in English in an abbreviated version<sup>20</sup>, played an import-

ant role in discussing relations of this kind. The extensive, 640-page doctoral dissertation was difficult to assimilate, even in its limited form. Written in the language of semiologists and psychoanalysts of the time, clearly influenced by the writing of Jacques Lacan, it often aroused reservations because of its extremely academic style<sup>21</sup>. Despite its difficulties for potential readers, over time it became one of the most influential books of the late 1960s and the next two decades.

The initial assumption of Kristeva's work was the view that modern ways of reasoning separate expressions of language from their bodily sources. As Joanna Bator put it in her commentary:

In her first work [...] Kristeva formulates the thesis that the drive does not so much have its representation in the language, but belongs to it both in its symbolic and bodily dimension. [...] In Kristeva's opinion, however, the logic of signification, structuring the symbolic order, also concerns this very domain and the very matter of the body. In this way the body is inscribed in language and the language is inscribed in the matter of the body, which already contains in itself "the logic of signification"<sup>22</sup>.

The concept of the symbolic sphere of language is a description of the aspirations, also encountered in the social sphere, to achieve homogeneous, stable and closed wholes, which, depending on the cultural area, can be called definitions, concepts or social communities. In relation to this aspect, Kristeva distinguished the semiotic sphere, which has as if a more primordial or archaic character, pre-verbal, pre-oedipal or related to the mother's body<sup>23</sup>. Still referring to the characteristics by Bator, one can also say:

the category of what is semiotic is connected with negativity inscribed in each identity of the subject and makes it impossible to definitively close the definition<sup>24</sup>.

Kristeva bases her characteristics of the semiotic category on the Platonic category of the *chôra*. [...] The *chôra* – preceding the order of what is symbolic – is the "mother" and the "vessel" of all things. [...] Kristeva refers the category of *chôra* to articulation, which has a "movable", "provisional" character and is related to space [...] <sup>25</sup>.

Kristeva found manifestations of the semiotic sphere in art, especially in the poetry of Comte de Lautréamont and Stéphane Mallarmé, but also in James Joyce's and Antonin Artaud's works. These were features negating purely communicative values, difficult to identify and connected with basic drives, as if carnal and material productive sounds and rhythms. Although many of her statements relating to modernist literature have been criticised, literary historians confirm that the musicality of poetry was not only a topic addressed by Mallarmé, but also appeared in the doctrines of Paul



<sup>21</sup> See A. Sokal, J. Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*, New York 1998, pp. 38–49.

<sup>22</sup> J. Bator, *Julia Kristeva: kobieta i „symboliczna rewolucja”*, „Teksty Drugie” 2000, no. 6, pp. 9–10.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.





<sup>26</sup> M. Margaroni, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> See B. Ogródnik, *O współczesnych rozwinięciach platońskiej kategorii chóra*, „Studia Whiteheadiana” 2006, no. 2, pp. 100–104. J. Derrida, *Khôra*, transl. I. McLeod, [w:] *idem*, *On the Name*, ed. T. Dutoit, Stanford 1995, p. 125: „Backward steps [retours en arrière] give to the whole of the Timaeus its rhythm”.

Verlaine or René Ghil. The task that Kristeva set herself was to give back, both to the *chôra* and to the layer of language defined as a semiotic one, the rootedness in femininity, especially their connections with the vast field of maternal experiences considered to be equally carnal as linguistic ones.

The views contained in *La Révolution du langage poétique* have received a lot of comments, but were mostly assimilated in a distorted form. Even her supporters among feminist researchers criticized Kristeva for her essentialism in the understanding of femininity and the scarcity of emancipatory motifs. This burden of misinterpretations was the reason why the author in her subsequent publications increasingly rarely referred to theses of her early work. A careful reading, however, clearly indicates that the more diligently extracted theses concerning the issue of the *chôra* have remained valid and can be used in the analysis of the works of art of subsequent modernist avant-garde. First of all, thanks to Kristeva’s research, one can draw attention to those values of artistic creations which, although contained in language or visibility, clearly do not belong to them. Is it to be understood that they are prior to rationality? This is one of the basic problems in the interpretation of Kristeva’s dissertation. Kristeva rather describes how the idea of origin and invention appears, rather than pointing to the biological, archaic or pre-verbal source of language and image. The searches included in the analysed work concern “other beginning” or “beginning before the beginning”. As Margaroni wrote about it:

the *chôra* should be perceived as neither a preverbal space nor as a timeless time before history. Its effect, as Kristeva has repeatedly pointed out, is *transverbal* (moving through and across logos) and *transhistorical* (alongside, opposite to and in the margins of history). “Our discourse – all discourse –” she writes, “moves with and against the *chôra* in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it” (p. 26). Similarly, the *chôra* and the semiotic disposition articulating and articulated through it can only be experienced **within** the symbolic. “The semiotic that ‘precedes’ symbolization”, she clarifies, “is only a **theoretical supposition** justified by the need for description” (p. 68)<sup>26</sup>.

The above quotation leaves no doubt that any beginning can only be invented, told or fictitious, and that it is necessary to examine in what circumstances its narrative may appear. The basic condition for the emergence of the consciousness of the beginning seems to be its doubling, i.e. inventing and returning to it in order to indicate the situation preceding it. In the clearest way this kind of situation can be found in the Platonic dialogue, where Timaeus, discussing the structure of the soul of the world, four times returns to the problem of the *chôra*, each time increasing its significance<sup>27</sup>. There is here a series of – as Margaroni described it – “palintropic movements”, references

which move back the beginning before its earlier establishment<sup>28</sup>. It is precisely these repeated returns that are the most primordial forms of what is usually called thinking or memory.

Plato first mentioned the *chôra* in the fragment of *Timaeus* 35a–b. Describing the creation of the soul of the world, the main narrator of the dialogue said about the action of the god:

he framed her out of the following elements and in the following way. From the undivided and ever changeless substance and that which becomes divided in material bodies, of both these he mingled in the third place the form of Essence, in the midst between the Same and the Other; and this he composed on such wise between the undivided and that which is in material bodies divided; and taking them, three in number, he blended them into one form, forcing the nature of the Other, hard as it was to mingle, into union with the Same<sup>29</sup>.

As Bogdan Ogrodnik noted, “the second approach to the description of the creation of the world was made by Plato from a different perspective”<sup>30</sup>. Plato clearly felt that not only the factor of divine reason, ‘but’ also *ananke* (*anáγκē*, *ἀνάγκη*), an erroneous necessity, was involved in the creation of the world. As he wrote in the fragment 47e–48b:

Now in our foregoing discourse, with few exceptions, we have been declaring the creations wrought through mind: we must now set by their side those things which come into being through necessity. For the generation of this universe was a mixed creation by a combination of necessity and reason. And whereas reason governed necessity, by persuading her to guide the greatest part of created things to the best end, on such conditions and principles, through necessity overcome by reasonable persuasion, this universe was fashioned in the beginning. If then we would really declare its creation in the manner whereby it has come to be, we must add also the nature of the Errant Cause, and its moving power. Thus then let us return upon our steps, and when we have found a second fitting cause for the things aforesaid, let us once more, proceeding in the present case as we did in the former, begin over again from the beginning<sup>31</sup>.

In „re-beginning of the beginning”, *Timaeus* (50d–51a) he claims:

For the present however we must conceive three kinds: first that which comes to be, secondly that wherein it comes to be, third that from which the becoming is copied when it is created. And we may liken the recipient to a mother, the model to a father, and that which is between them to a child; and we must remember that if a moulded copy is to present to view all varieties of form, the matter in which it is moulded cannot be rightly prepared unless it be entirely bereft of all those forms which it is about to receive from without. For were it like any one of the entering shapes, whenever



<sup>28</sup> M. Margaroni, *op. cit.*, p. 82, 87.

<sup>29</sup> *The Timaeus of Plato*, transl. R. D. Archer-Hind, London – New York 1888, pp. 105–107 (with commentary).

<sup>30</sup> B. Ogrodnik, *op. cit.*, p. 102

<sup>31</sup> *The Timaeus...*, p. 165–169.



<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 177–179.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 183–185.

<sup>34</sup> B. Ogrodnik, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>35</sup> *The Timaeus...*, pp. 187–188.

that of an opposite or entirely different nature came upon it, it would in receiving it give the impression badly, intruding its own form. Wherefore that which shall receive all forms within itself must be utterly without share in any of the forms. [...] Therefore the mother and recipient of creation which is visible and by any sense perceptible we must call neither earth nor air nor fire nor water, nor the combinations of these nor the elements of which they are formed: but we shall not err in affirming it to be a viewless nature and formless, all-receiving, in some manner most bewildering and hard to comprehend partaking of the intelligible<sup>32</sup>.

In the third approach (52a–52b) the speaker repeats his scheme, but gives the *chôra* even more disturbing properties:

This being so, we must agree that there is first the unchanging idea, unbegotten and imperishable, neither receiving aught into itself from without nor itself entering into aught else, invisible, nor in any wise perceptible even that whereof the contemplation belongs to thought. Second is that which is named after it and is like to it, sensible, created, ever in motion, coming to be in a certain place and again from thence perishing, apprehensible by opinion with sensation (p. 183). And the third kind is space everlasting, admitting not destruction, but (p. 185) affording place for all things that come into being, itself apprehensible without sensation by a sort of **bastard reasoning, hardly matter of belief**. It is with this in view that **dreaming** we say that all which exists must be in some place and filling some space, and that what is neither on earth nor in heaven anywhere is nought<sup>33</sup>.

In the fourth approach (52d–53a), the *chôra* separates the elements, but only impermanently, so that it remains in constant motion, moving them and being moved by them. This is opposed by the action of the Demiurge, which stabilises the “the dynamic substrate of the world”<sup>34</sup>. In *Timaeus*’ story we do not get some knowledge, but only an illustrative suggestion supported by the metaphor of sieve:

And the nurse of becoming, being made liquid and fiery and putting on the forms of earth and air, and undergoing all the conditions that attend thereupon, displays to view all manner of semblances; and because she is filled with powers that are not similar nor equivalent, she is at no part of her in even balance, but being swayed in all directions unevenly, she is herself shaken by the entering forms, and by her motion shakes them again in turn: and they, being thus stirred, are carried in different directions and separated, just as by sieves and instruments for winnowing corn the grain is shaken and sifted, and the dense and heavy parts go one way, and the rare and light are carried to a different place and settle there. Even so when the four kinds are shaken by the recipient, which by the motion she has received acts as an instrument for shaking, she separates the most dissimilar elements furthest apart from one another, and the most similar she draws chiefly together; for which cause these elements had different regions even before the universe was ordered out of them and created<sup>35</sup>.

English translations (by Benjamin Jowett, Richard Dacre Archer-Hind, Robin Waterfield, Peter Kalkavage), and German (by Hieronymus Müller, Franz Susemihl, Thomas Paulsen, Hans Günter Zekla), to mention only the most frequently cited translations of *Timaeus*, may be criticized for various changes in relation to the original, but it is the original text itself that leads to uncertainty. The fragments quoted above do not allow the basic determinations to be made: whether the *chôra* is passive or active, whether it is a benevolent receiver or a dangerous abyss, more a calm place or rather a dynamic structure (or even a machine) that separates the elements that are alien to each other. Julia Kristeva can be easily accused that she did not so much borrowed the concept of the *chôra* from Plato, but rather appropriated and changed it, however, in such a case it should be said that she did so encouraged by the formula of the presentation of views by the Greek thinker. As Margaroni commented on this issue: the *chôra* produces the bother of the beginning, which must be constantly reactivated<sup>36</sup>, but this is only one of the reasons why it is intrinsically unresolvable regarding its characteristics. It can be seen that its inclinations to decomposition revealed themselves when someone striving to close the knowledge system. Ogrodnik commented on *Timaeus*' attempts to characterise the basic cosmic order and the swelling of the *chôra* problem as follows:

It seems that in Plato's approaches to the problem of the metaphysical components of the world described above, the importance of the *chôra* is constantly increasing. First, the third type of being is understood as a derivative of the first two. Further on, however, the *chôra* turns out to be the second (besides the eternal Model) basic principle, to finally turn out to be capable of self-organization (to a small extent, however)<sup>37</sup>.

The summary of the Polish author points to this aspect of creating order in the cosmos and aspirations to create a logically saturated knowledge of it, which is a multitude of non-identical active ingredients of a potential fully ordered whole. From the first words of *Timaeus* we are dealing with showing that the whole is a set of at least three parts. In the first words of the conversation, Socrates insists even on the fourth participant: "One, two, three what is become of the fourth, my dear Timaeus, of our yesterday's guests and our entertainers of to-day?"<sup>38</sup>.

In a particularly controversial fragment, Plato, in turn, divides the "pre-world" into three:

Such then is the statement for which I give my sentence, as we have briefly reasoned it out: that there are Being and Space and Becoming, three in number with threefold nature, even before the heavens were created<sup>39</sup>.



<sup>36</sup> M. Margaroni, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> B. Ogrodnik, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>38</sup> *The Timaeus...*, 17a, p. 13. See also J. Sallis, *op. cit.*, p. 7; *idem*, *Traces of the Chôra*, [in:] *Retracing the Platonic Text*, ed. J. Russon, J. Sallis, Evanston 2000, pp. 57–58; C. H. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers. The Coherence of the Dialogues*, Chicago 2009, p. 423.

<sup>39</sup> *The Timaeus...*, 52d, p. 187.



<sup>40</sup> See J. Kristeva, *Revolution...*, p. 13: „Our philosophies of language, embodiments of the Idea, are nothing more than the thoughts of archivists, archaeologists, and necrophiliacs. Fascinated by the remains of a process which is partly discursive, they substitute this fetish for what actually produced it. Egypt, Babylon, Mycenae: we see their pyramids, their carved tablets, and fragmented codes in the discourse of our contemporaries, and think that by codifying them we can possess them. These static thoughts, products of a leisurely cogitation removed from historical turmoil, persist in seeking the truth of language by formalizing utterances that hang in midair, and the truth of the subject by listening to the narrative of a sleeping body—a body in repose, withdrawn from its socio-historical imbrication, removed from direct experience: »To be or not to be... To die, to sleep... To sleep – perchance to dream«.

These tripartite divisions abolish the law of unity, but also deny binary order as too simple and thus too close to the principle of the whole. They introduce a dramatic complication, the source of which is the *chôra*. It is the *chôra* that, initially destroying unity, becomes the figure of every future negativity. From the findings so far one can draw a conclusion that Kristeva, when encountering the problem of the *chôra*, noticed above all its decomposing, demolishing and rebellious character. Perhaps it was a consequence of the political climate in which the French author wrote that the repeated appearance of the *chôra* in Plato's text, each time as if changed, and thus constantly introducing an element of novelty and thus actually being a figure of invention, found its conclusion in the title issue of the revolution. Unintentionally questioned by Plato, the issue of the beginning has been turned into a denial of order, as the designation of the beginning is the beginning of a specific order. At the time when the *La Révolution du langage poétique* was written, the order fought against in the author's environment was the capitalist system in the field of economics and bourgeois democracy in the field of politics.

After 1968, however, the political situation in France underwent complex changes. Extreme left-wing elements, in particular Maoism and Trotskyism, but also sympathy for the system of so-called real socialism or the USSR, became an unpleasant baggage for the future of the left-wing in the West. It is enough to mention that in 1970 Alexandr Solzhenitsyn received the Nobel Prize for Literature, which contributed to an increased interest in the author's saga about communist forced labour camps, through which 60 million people passed. The reasons for the disappointment with the purely political figures of left-wing ideology, among the intellectuals interested in it in the West, were more at that time. Perhaps this was the reason why the ideas of the revolution shifted to the issues of language, psychology, art (including architecture) and the position of women. Kristeva's publication was one of the strongest manifestations of this trend.

According to Kristeva's views, the thought and culture of the Western world has been marked by reifying tendencies of reason from its very beginning. The Greek *logos* was probably not so limited, but in subsequent epochs and especially in the period since the Enlightenment, semiotic values have been strongly suppressed. In her opinion, modern modes of thinking are a product of "archivists, archaeologists, and necrophiliacs"<sup>40</sup>. Changes in this respect are taking place in the area of various phenomena as if secondary to the main ideological cults, including, among others, avant-garde art. Pushed underground and treated as already abolished or only alternative reactions to the world, emotions, bodily reflexes, mystical exaltations or carnival games saturated with freedom have their counterpart in the art of breaking the bonds of artistry focused only on imitation of reality. Kristeva formulates a controversial thesis that the searches characteristic of modernist poets for linguistic equivalents for exis-



tence beyond obviousness and reality are an upheaval comparable to political revolution and introduce a specific filter between meta-physical inquiries and desired social changes. Violations of language introduce to it cracks, breaks, one could say “holes”, empty places that bring a new reality through changes of consciousness. Poetry, reaching beyond the obvious, not only restores contact with the more biological nature of reasonableness, but also examines the pure activity that precedes reason, determines the status of abyss or nothingness that is most difficult to be approached in the language. When it reaches for basic, archaic or initial values, it encounters a certain non-existence, which can be associated with the *chôra*.

Non-existence or pre-existence, as properties of the *chôra*, do not describe it only ontologically, but also ontically or functionally. They are the unclear and excessive side of rationality, the other side of language and its descriptive functions, as well as a factor distorting social order. Ordinary rationality leads to a fully organized society, aggressively responding to attempts at correction and multiplying forms of control, not by accident having a predilection for the control of carnality and sexuality. Overabundance or rational excess, always using the potential of the *chôra*, introduces alternatives, loosening and multiplicity. A recurring problem is the space of transition from traditional to modified orders. Margaroni describes the *chôra* also in this its manifestation and for this purpose uses inspirations from the work of John Protevi *Political Physics*<sup>41</sup>.

Protevi put forward a thesis proclaiming the existence of two oppositional philosophies of order<sup>42</sup>. The first of them, dominant in the Western tradition, he described as hylemorphic and fully realized in authoritarian regimes, where also in relation to human corporeality, the aspirations for full subordination and exclusion of the possibility of chance, movement or change prevail. The alternative and hitherto neglected philosophy of order presupposes directing attention to the possibilities of self-organization, which can also be seen in the purely material world. The philosophy and practice of self-organization is based on the principle of transient connections of accidental elements, as frequent as their disconnections, taking into account both forward and backward movements, escaping and transformations as well. Such behaviours have always been present in societies, but were treated as marginal, meaningless, not belonging to the fundamental objectives of the community. Above all, however, the values of self-organization were not elevated as philosophical ideals, since philosophy has been fascinated by the order formed by large groups and their centres of power. However, not only religion and its myths or myths about the existence of nations (supported by state institutions), but also the Cartesian subject or the concept of the transcendental Self (from Fichte to Husserl) and, in general, the whole science since modern times has been inspired by the ideas of unity, integrity, order and logic. In order to strengthen his theses, Protevi calls all such orientations fascist.



<sup>41</sup> J. Protevi, *Political Physics: Deleuze, Derrida and the Body Politic*, London – New York 2001.

<sup>42</sup> See M. Margaroni, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

Margaroni does not attribute a similarity to Protevi's views to Kristeva's understanding of the *chôra*, but attempts to update her theses in the spirit of materialistic philosophy. He takes into account that Protevi positively assessed the ordering activities of the *chôra* itself, before they were taken over and developed by the Demiurge. Therefore, he uses observations from *Political Physics* to emphasize that Kristeva also drew attention to the richness and complexity of forces and tensions within the *chôra*, similar to the idea of self-organization and free from dependence on any transcendent sources. Spontaneous forces and spontaneous actions without a beginning and purpose, not unified and devoid of the centre gain in her interpretation the values and meanings that have been underestimated so far. The *chôra*, in a greater dimension than hitherto, becomes in these explanations not so much a space prior to the creation as it makes any creation possible, participating in it and remaining active, though in a disturbing way, in the created order. However, *chôra*'s participations in reality are not mild, but demonic and subversive. No homogeneous whole or order emerged without the *chôra*, but its contribution to order is the reason why it cannot be permanent.

Already in Plato's dialogue, the *chôra* was a space in which the transition from idea to reality took place, and Plato described the complex laws in which these two incompatible modes of being connect with each other. Art history examines the analogous phenomenon of the dependence of artistic products on ideas prevailing in the times of producing specific works of art. The problem with this phenomenon is that evidences for such relationships exist only within a specific story, which is the Hegelian historiosophy. Kristeva's concept of *chôra* makes it possible to create new explanations for the phenomenon of links between the material work and the sphere of ideas. For Kristeva makes of art a place or space de-territorialised and de-territorialising, first of all not so much produced as producing and destroying what has been produced. In such a case, the *chôra* must be understood not only as a motherly helping to pass from one form to another, but also as interrupting such passages. It is a flow, produces flows and at the same time negates their possibility. The motherhoodness of the *chôra* gives life to beings that are disturbingly different from what created them, and yet it is the *chôra* that participates in them with its non-existence. One can see certain impossibilities in these opinions, but all of them are based on Plato's text. As far as the Parc de La Villette is concerned, it can also be assumed that it is not so much a material work, but rather an area that denies its own permanence and disperses itself.

The above passages on Kristeva's semiotic *chôra* were made selectively in relation to her work *La Révolution du langage poétique* and with the characteristics of the Parc de La Villette in mind. The park foundation was preceded by Tschumi's essays on the issue of revolution in space, so containing concepts similar to the problems

of revolution in language. The conflicting nature of space described by the architect is equipped with the same embryos of decomposition and social disintegration as the language of Lautréamont and Mallarmé's poetry described by Kristeva. In Kristeva's view, the *chôra* presented itself as a factor of disintegration and rebellion, which, although suppressed by conventionalized forms of language or reasonableness, is nevertheless their irremovable, excessive component. The forces of the language, comparable to the Dionysian factor described by Nietzsche, are particularly violent in situations where natural activity is tethered by excess of order and organisation. The *chôra*, however, also participates in this kind of excess, and it is the *chôra* that tightens the bonds of reason in order to be able to explode as opposition to it. It is difficult to identify, because it reveals itself as a gap, tear or disconnection, as nothingness, abyss or non-existence. Such a void or a hole, however, turns out to be a pure activity devoid of space and time. It can be a figure of any invention, revolution or new beginning. Looking at the issue of the *chôra*'s activity in social space, it is evident that it comes about by extracting from the established order of time its pre-established beginning, a fictitious moment that precedes history and inspires openness to the dangerous future to which the community is anyway condemned. A new legend or myth are artificial and belong to the field of art before they are included in the repository of philosophy, religion or politics. The beginning of time is always in fiction, so perhaps it should not be surprising that for Kristeva or Tschumi it is the activity of artists that creates the leaven of all reality. Non-time and non-spatial "something" between idea and realization creates history and the place where it unfolds. It can only be learned as a kind of sleepy vision, the adequate reflection of which can only be obtained in the illusory description of a magus, poet, prophet or artist. It follows that the shares of art in reality in general and in social reality in particular are much greater than it has been accepted so far. However, in order for art to fulfil its task of producing reality, it must protect its unreal character, it must not exist, it must be a break enabling existence. Tschumi's work was in many points associated with such a *chôric* concept of architecture.

### **Variants of empty spaces in Tschumi's theory**

In philosophical studies, the characteristics of the space from which reality originates and due to which it never reaches the state of permanence have posed difficulties since Plato's time. It is therefore surprising to note that the knowledge on this subject was greatly enriched by the statements of the architect, whose theoretical activity may be regarded as secondary to a strictly professional philosophy. However, in the second half of the twentieth century professional philosophers did not contribute much to reflection on space, while





<sup>43</sup> B. Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge [Massachusetts] – London 1996, p. 15. See also M. Herer, *L'imagination prend le pouvoir. Rue de Seine et/ou Science Po, escalier, "Variations"*. *Revue internationale de théorie critique* 2008, no. 11: *La beauté est dans la rue. Mai 68 au présent*; S. J. Hilwig, *An Oral History of Memories of 1968 in Italy*, [in:] *Memories 1968: International Perspectives*, ed. I. Cornils, S. Waters, Oxford 2010, p. 244.

the observations of Tschumi, a politically engaged representative of a very material and practical field of art, proved to be helpful in describing that phenomenon. In a group of his essays written from 1976 to 1990, Tschumi put forward a long series of theses referring to the distorting and rebellious properties of certain isolated and specific spaces. His writing, defined by the author himself as “subversive analyses”, was a continuation of earlier activist (or situationalist) tactics, such as the short-term occupation with students of the Architectural Association School in November 1971 of the closed Kentish Town Railway Station and by squatting behaviour transforming it into an area of art. Texts written later had a similar spirit of breaking the ties hindering the activity of participants of city cultures. According to Tschumi, architecture does not contribute to rapid and radical social change, but the activation of a neglected factor of imagination and invention in architecture can contribute to improving the condition of urban and political life. One of the slogans of the Paris Revolution of 1968, “all power to the imagination”<sup>43</sup> was taken up in theoretical considerations, which – as well as political life – are constantly threatened by the lack of alternatives to the dominant currents. His research on invention must inevitably be associated with considerations on the *chôra* that can be regarded as a cumulative and inexhaustible beginning.

Tschumi’s “subversive analyses” were not aimed at directly influencing politics and distanced themselves from the translation of political objectives into architectural solutions. From the very beginning, architecture has represented social structures, political or religious concepts, engaging its fundamental values to strengthen political stability. Contrary to this tradition, Tschumi sought to create a new concept of architecture, the politics of which would be based on the creation of a space for free negotiation between different spheres of human activity. The created areas would give room for confrontation of stances, which meant that they would be open to older and newer disjunctions, more precisely: to the conflicting components of society. Such territories would constantly change what has been existing, change and create variations of the solutions already achieved, make the produced values uncertain and force their constant reproduction. The aim was therefore to create places which, with their deficiencies and instability, would arouse the need to rethink and repeat the beginning of every founding myth.

The instability of modern societies does not differ from the conflicting nature of the earlier ones, but in the past it was suppressed by the mechanisms of the state or religion. Nowadays, in order to achieve unity or a community of goals, it is necessary to use more complex mechanisms, first of all, to provide a political place for a greater number of separate aspirations. It also changes the tasks of the art of articulating space, which must, more than ever before, develop its links with the social world. This requires architecture to

become an extended consciousness, a form of knowledge, just like mathematics or philosophy, and, moreover, to acquire professional expertise about composing from literature, literary research or the history of cinema, for example. The almost exclusive focus on constructing material objects with a strictly defined purpose, nice and stable, does not correspond to the development of other fields, which have increased their attention to theoretical aspects. In the art of building, concepts had already preceded or followed the completed objects, but now – after a period of somewhat exaggerated conceptualization in the sixties of the twentieth century while neglecting the realization side – theories are created together with the already created works, they contain themselves in them, while their verbalizations are secondary to the their initial state. Some of such creations, such as the Parc de La Villette, do not function only in the sphere of visibility, they do not materialize concepts, but are concepts whose presence has become a problem in the literal sense.

The understanding of architecture, exposed by Vitruvius or Leon Battista Alberti, emphasizing its materiality, usefulness and beauty, gave it a secondary position in society, bringing it to the level of servitude towards political power. The current dispersion of factors of power gives it to the most unexpected participants. Paradoxically, however, it also creates a suggestion that there is no need for structural change, and brings a climate of the needlessness of alternatives. Strongly institutionalised democracy promotes its traditional actors, but ignores its newer adepts. The concept of architecture created by Tschumi, emphasizing its instability and constant balancing on the edge of change, gave place and a chance to make visible the tensions resulting from the growing pluralization of society. The community fixed in comfortable solutions is usually hostile to change, so the architecture conceptualized by Tschumi clearly stood on the side of aesthetics of resistance to all social habits. In this context, what was not expected, or perhaps even what society did not want, became architecture<sup>44</sup>.

An extremely diverse society is moving into a state of transitional order after taking into account the tensions that exist in it. This state, in which it remains, described in Tschumi's language as disjunction, dispersion or disruption, never ends, however, and the internal contradictiveness or conflictness proper to the community should be constantly reiterated. Such observations were the reason why in the theory in question the discussion of tensions inside and outside architecture was revisited in various ways. Tschumi noticed strong contradictions in the concepts of space, which were decisive for his field, moreover – in the spirit of negation of opinions expressed by both traditionalists and modernists – he described the pleasure produced by the built objects and drew attention to the incompatibility of events (taking place in buildings) to the environment created by the designer. Events and their places are linked by conflict. The sepa-



<sup>44</sup> See B. Tschumi, *The Architectural Paradox*, [in:] *idem*, *Architecture and Disjunction...*, p. 46: "So architecture seems to survive only when it saves its nature by negating the form that society expects of it". He also wrote in a similar way in *Architecture and Transgression* ([in:] *idem*, *Architecture and Disjunction...*, pp. 72, 78).



ration of form and function was also an indication of the need to take into account the distorting factor of the art of building more than before. Any subversiveness of architecture perceived by Tschumi was ultimately intended to reconstruct the community, albeit only after taking into account the turbulent nature of collective life.

In a situation where in defining architecture the Vitruvian and Albertian trinity of goals was questioned and since Sigfried Giedion's times the claim that it is the art of shaping space has been focused on, the issues of stating the nature of space have not been considered more broadly. Tschumi introduced the thesis that the saturation of space with disturbing and subversive properties results from the contradictions they contain. Such a hypothesis required an indication of the basic components of the alleged antinomies and, at the same time, prompted a question about the ways in which builders proceed in the situation of incompatibility of the main features of architecture. The additional question referred the Parc de La Villette and concerned the impact of the conflict of features on this particular place.

Discussing the paradox of space, Tschumi stated that it concerns the incompatibility of understanding space as a product of the mind and at the same time an object of direct sensual experience. Space, since the times of Plato and Aristotle, then the dispute over it between Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Issac Newton, the views of Immanuel Kant and ultimately in the 20th century the influence of Albert Einstein's theory, is primarily an intellectual matter. In architecture, the intellectual understanding of space was expressed in putting forward at the beginning of the process of building the concept of an object in the form of drawings, theories and models. The intellectual equipment of architecture also includes giving symbolic meanings to forms and making it a space of representation of religious and political values. In the twentieth century, the characterization of space with thinking was manifested by the influence of linguistic theories resulting in treating architecture as a system of non-verbal signs, which created a historical repository, sometimes supplemented with new expressions, but above all subjected to complex syntax manipulations, saturated with meanings and individual expression. In many cases, both traditionalists and modernists were inclined to treat architecture as a text or even a variant of a literary work.

A completely different concept of architectural spaces is created by the various sensual impressions experienced by the user of the object, both in relation to the various shapes of the solid or its decoration, as well as the disposition of the interior. The exuberance of Baroque forms does not have to be the main example of this, because nowadays, works by artists such as Bruce Nauman, Doug Wheeler, Robert Irwin or Michael Asher can equally well testify to the subjective and bodily character of space. In their works, the extreme limitation of stimuli, resulting from minimalistically treated interior

arrangements, almost completely transferred their reception to the sphere of purely sensual impressions. However, there was some ambivalence in the reception, because the starting point of the sensual experiences were works of a very intellectual character. The sensuality of architecture is also manifested in the violence with which the users are affected by the shapes of rooms, narrow corridors, high or low ceilings, places of group meetings or prison seclusion. Human movements also create architectural space, both when they enter into various relationships with material space shaped in the build work, and when they happen in an empty space. In this respect, Tschumi referred to dance artists, such as Trisha Brown and Simone Forti, whose achievements can be interpreted in terms of architecture. Here we can also talk about the tension between the sensual and intellectual spheres, because in the case of Forti her dance was treated as a kind of thinking<sup>45</sup>.

Contact with an orthogonal object of architecture, its external solid or a specific room in it, is never possible with regard to the whole of such an object, but only with regard to its individual parts – external or internal walls. Perception always refers to a fragment, which by reflection is included in the whole. The sensual aspects of architecture do not, therefore, refer to experiencing an abstract whole, but to specific components or human behaviours (in each case creating or articulating space). Sensuality is essentially unprocessed and direct, it is a personal experience of a single element. However, this approach cannot be absolutised. All supposedly primordial sensual directness is only a part of the system of experience, which gains its fullness by transcending individual conditions. Ideal, purely intellectual space cannot function as solely separate from the living space. The concept of space is not a whole space, just as “the concept of the dog doesn’t bark”<sup>46</sup>. Architecture usually transgressed the paradox of perfect and real space in an unconscious way. Tschumi’s theory assumes in this respect a change consisting in emphasizing the third – besides the intellectual and sensual space – condition of the functioning of architecture, which has been omitted so far. This additional requirement to his description was taken from the works of Georges Bataille on internal experience, but one can notice that it is also another version of the description of the *chôra* phenomenon.

The third condition of architectural space assumes the deliberate creation of places that break the limitations of the other two conditions. For logical reasons, it follows that they cannot be either entirely ideological or only real. Therefore, they constitute themselves in the condition of imagination, in imagination understood as a false image or even illusion. This kind of illusion can also be associated with utopia or a garden/park, but it would no longer be a garden of paradise or even a garden of earthly pleasures, but a forbidden circle of underground joys, a garden of dark and dangerous pleasures typical of living in large metropolises. The Parc de La Villette has



<sup>45</sup> Simone Forti. *Thinking with the Body*, ed. S. Breitwieser, Salzburg 2014.

<sup>46</sup> See B. Tschumi, *The Architectural Paradox...*, p. 48: “»The concept of dog does not bark«, the concept of space is not in space”. The first part of the statement is traditionally attributed to B. Spinoza.



<sup>47</sup> B. Tschumi, *Six Concepts*, [in:] *idem*, *Architecture and Disjunction...*, p. 247: "things that go bump in the night". In the traditional Scottish prayer from which this verse comes, there is a request for salvation from nightmares. Tschumi has a definitely positive attitude towards them.

<sup>48</sup> A. Breton, *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, [in:] *idem*, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, transl. R. Seaver, H. R. Lane, Ann Arbor [Michigan] 1972, p. 123-124; *idem*, *Second Manifeste du surréalisme*, "La Révolution Surréaliste" 15 décembre 1929, No. 12, p. 1: "Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable. Le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement. [...] le point don't il est question est à fortiori celui où la construction et la destruction cessent de pouvoir être brandies l'une contre l'autre". See also B. Tschumi, *Architecture and Transgression...*, p. 70.

all the features of such disconnected non-place where things happen that frighten in the night<sup>47</sup>. Tschumi also associates this condition with the often quoted fragment of Andre Breton's work, which states that:

Everything leads us to believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. [...] the point in question is a fortiori that at which construction and destruction can no longer be set against each other<sup>48</sup>.

The Parc de La Villette, due to its links with Tschumi's theories and at the same time the values of a popular place, is a suitable example of a place between concepts and practices of organizing space. Its architecture is not the result of formulas that force users to adopt specific behaviours in this area, but of the strength of the territory where new regroupings and self-organisation processes are constantly taking place. The rules of this place have not been written in any other way than by transgressing the classical principles of architecture and are produced in constant processes of change. In a situation when in the tradition of building art the most characteristic building was a house with its own idea of *Geborgenheit*, and the park was an architectural excess, nowadays it is the park with its instability that has become a political and moral model, and in relation to which the house, school or hospital are threatening prisons. The Parc de La Villette in the structure of the city is a shoreless utopian island saturated with dreams of crossing the existing boundaries of architecture, community and democracy. Like any illusion, this one deceives with the forces of extraordinary pleasure.

For separate reasons, both traditionalists and modernists avoided the recognition of pleasure as an important aspect of architecture and were much more willing to engage in dialectical disputes over pairs of concepts such as structure or chaos, ornament or purism, while pleasure, a feature that escapes the laws of order, can be situated inside and outside the typical opposition, is dialectical, but at the same time in many contemporary philosophical concepts it is used as a tool to weaken dialectic. As an impulsive reaction, it can apply both to the space subjected to the rigours of the intellect, as well as to the space that is aimed at stimulating the senses. The pleasure of architecture – like the *chôra* – is not analysable and can be seen only in traces, fragments and madness. It can also relate to rational values. Although modernity prompts us to seek pleasure beyond its simple sources, it cannot be denied that the traditional principles of architecture were dominated by a tendency to rational order and that they provided cold satisfaction and a sense of security. Even then, however, the manipulations of architectural vocabulary and syntax broke out of limitations and triggered a certain lack of inhibitions.

In the most rigorous versions of observing the rules of order, one can see the features of madness indicating to what extent the behaviour of the system requires violating its borders.

In 1991–1987, Tschumi wrote a series of essays which are linked by the concept of architectural programming. The assumptions adopted at that time directed the design not so much towards the creation of buildings fulfilling certain functions and providing practical amenities, but rather tried to create spaces of events in an unpredictable future. These spaces also created a scene for events that were already happening, but elusive due to their poor visibility. Visible in some cases can only be called to be seen. This is what the park wanted to contribute to. His texts of this period outlined a vision of the nature of contemporary social relations and inadequate responses to them in the area of architecture, and therefore presented new design methods and set them a political and moral goal.

The organisation of society is based usually on tried and tested solutions and is subject to modifications of a very limited scope. In the 20th century, however, collective tendencies to build orderly and homogeneous societies were constantly confronted with predispositions for radical change and pluralisation. Both inclinations were prone to intransigence and mutual destruction, and their extremes aroused fear and evoked the aura of apocalypse. To a certain extent, regardless of the main trends, the life of societies and individuals was deprived of deeper, metaphysical foundations and was organized on the basis of limitation of objectives and accidental, fluctuating choices of values. Serious changes took place especially in the lives of the inhabitants of large metropolises, who were marked by a sense of uprooting and deprived of permanent links with their place of residence. Their existence began to grow into a new mythology, in which the source of satisfaction were the dangerous aspects of the functioning of metropolitan life. Separate tensions arose from migration processes that turned the great countries of Europe and North America into multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.

In Tschumi's opinion, the character of contemporary architecture remained indifferent to the political, social and existential contradictions that emerged in the last 20th century. The field of building contains the decisive features of being unstable, but the influence of the characteristics of old societies caused that its ability to express and perpetuate all kinds of stability was usually exposed. The architect's intentions were directed in the opposite direction. Tschumi declared that architecture should be a factor of change or at least more appropriately express and activate the changes that seem inevitable in modern societies. The instrument of the new architecture should be the programming of events taking place in it in that sense of the term, which combined it with the definition of an incident, accident or collision.



In the proposed concept, therefore, the event was a kind of catastrophe, disturbance and disruption in ordinariness, but at the same time, inevitable for each individual and collective existence, a random case that reveals that which is real. Architecture has so far suppressed the explosive force of happening, while Tschumi proposed to make this inevitability visible and colonize it. At the same time, it is not possible for the explosive power of reality to be re-injected into the framework of an ordinary rational order. The architects' actions should be less rational, i.e. less based on bringing individual energies to a state of universal cohesion, while their reason should be strengthened (although it would be a very individualised reason). The most appropriate seemed to Tschumi to juxtapose specifically understood components of architecture, arranging them like a puzzle or stitching like a patchwork. The Parc de La Villette, within these postulates, was an example of replacing the reasonable order with the processing of elements already functioning in this area with equally transformatively treated new elements, therefore a combination of differences in general. In the tissue of the city it was supposed to be a tear, as if a healing wound in the place where the skin of the city was torn.

The organization of cities of Western civilization since the times of ancient Greece has been politically marked by the ideals of hierarchical arrangements, which have been most perfectly expressed in the Platonic descriptions of an excellent society. Also in the twentieth century, ideas for the city did not take into account the aspect of increasing group diversity and the autonomy of individuals. Tschumi described the problems of modern societies using the terms dissociation, dispersion or disruption. The phenomena associated with these terms, however, were not treated by architects as suitable for inclusion in the organization of urban space. It seems that they were rather received with fear or shame and hidden from the eyes of the public. The multiple social disparities and new peculiarities of individual life were not reflected in the systems of political organisations either. Against the background of petrified institutions (based on religious or national mythologies), the system proposed by the Parc de La Villette enhances the innovative factor by using the insights of post-constructural thinkers and inspirations derived from the philosophy of deconstruction. Academic political thought in the times discussed here had little to say about the characteristics of human existence in contemporary *polis*. The peculiarities of the behaviour of city dwellers were described only initially in the works of Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes or Jacques Lacan, which were often mentioned in Tschumi's texts. The architect's efforts to learn about the symptoms of modernity can therefore be appreciated, but it seems that in general it is the language itself, including philosophical language, that resists this kind of inquiry. Thus, both Tschumi's texts and realizations have their value also as areas of me-



diation and searching for new means of representation. In the Parc de La Villette, particular attention is drawn to the *folies*, which can be treated as accurate examples of “war machines” described by Gilles Deleuze, breaking down the regimes of knowledge, religious beliefs, ideology and the needs of belonging. Likewise accurately Tschumi used analyses taken from Sigmund Freud and Lacan concerning the so-called transfer, i.e. controlling madness by an artificial grouping of broken elements of the individual’s or community’s psyche.

The method adopted during the design of the Parc de La Villette was a denial of composing based on defined assumptions and clear objectives. Nor was it a reflection of external social or rational orders, instead giving room for questioning them or thinking about. The procedure applied, described by the architect as “disjunctive analysis”<sup>49</sup>, assumed that the designed area would be devoid of determinants directing the users’ behaviour, thus the opposition between form and its application would be developed. This type of separation has often occurred in architecture, but usually the relationship between form and function has been attempted to intensify rather than weaken. However, this led to the creation of systems in which the user was unequivocally directed by the adopted functional solutions. Such measures were also used in gardens and parks, which, in comparison with other architectural structures, provided a great deal of freedom of behaviour for the people passing their time there. However, users continued to be induced to take advantage of clearly suggested entertainment. The Parc de La Villette is similarly saturated with educational and cultural buildings, but structurally it does not contain decisive indications of attitudes or modes of movement in its area. It may even be said that it is not architectural, as its architecture is not standard static, but variable, “fluid” and adapts to the movements of people moving around its area. The lack of boundaries of the park makes it problematic even the definition of its area, which structurally does not exist without visitors filling it. Guests’ contribution to the architecture of this part of the city turns them into citizens, but it is a plug-in citizenship, which is only valid when an individual turns his or her application on. Architecture of this kind moves from permanent elements to temporary behaviour of people passing through the park: nomads, tourists or residents who cannot always boast a French or Parisian descent. Not a suburban amusement park like Disneyland, it has a political programme based on creating a sense of commitment towards the urban environment.

In place of the composition, an extensive system of assemblages, variations, transformations and combinations was used in the park. The structure of the park consists of three superimposed layers of lines, points and planes, as described earlier. Only at this point of the park’s analysis can we add that the structure of the park, which is not the result of an ordinary composition, is a gap space, in which combinations of incompatible elements take place. The main parts



<sup>49</sup> B. Tschumi, *Disjunctions*, [in:] *idem, Architecture and Disjunction...*, p. 212; see also C. Ebert, *The Dilemma with Disjunction: Architecture and Discourse in Bernard Tschumi’s Early Work*, “*Thesis. Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar*” 2003, no. 4, pp. 15–17.



<sup>50</sup> B. Tschumi, *Madness and the Combinative*, [in:] *idem*, *Architecture and Disjunction*, p. 183. Tschumi referred to the creature referred to as "der Papstesels" completely incidentally, which does not diminish its importance as an example of a hybrid of exceptional complexity. The legend of the discovery in 1496 on the shore of the Tiber of a monster with a woman's body and donkey's head, covered with fish scales, with one leg ended with eagles' nails and the other with a hoof, was used by Luther and Melanchthon to put forward antipathy theses in their letter published in Wittenberg in 1523, entitled *Deutung der zwei gräulichen Figuren Papstesels zu Rom und Mönchskalbs zu Freiberg in Meissen gefunden*.

<sup>51</sup> B. Tschumi, *Madness...*, s. 183. Tschumi indicates as the source of this phrase the work of R. Barthes (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, transl. R. Miller, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1989, p. 29–30), who after Marquis de Sade described a copulating group consisting of "Bracciano and Chigi (cardinals of Pius VI), Olympia Borghese, Julietta, extras, monkey, turkey, child and dog".

<sup>52</sup> B. Tschumi, *De-, Dis-, Ex-*, [w:] *idem*, *Architecture and Disjunction...*, s. 220. See also Comte de Lautrémont, *Les Chants de Maldoror (1868–1869)*, [in:] *idem*, *Œuvres complètes*, éd. G. L. Mano, Paris 1938, chant VI, 1, p. 256: "une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie".

<sup>53</sup> B. Tschumi, *Madness...*, p. 180.

<sup>54</sup> *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond*, transl. R. Bowlby, Stanford 2000, p. 149; as cit. in: B. Weltman-Aron, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

to be separated and mixed consist of permanent terrain and equipment values and non-permanent events. Combinations of these components are not normalised, but even conflicting, and they are the ones that make up the character of the place. Usually in descriptions of the park, attention is given to red pavilions, in which madness, variations and transformations have gained distinct visuality. However, when the park is considered in terms of event, then one can also find the disjunctions searched for in the transformations of the relationship between the visitors and the unobvious structure of the Parc de La Villette. The functioning of the park moves into the gap between its uncertain presence and the undetermined subjectivity of users. In this view, the park is an urban hole saturated with violence, in which – repeating the words of the architect himself – "the Pope's ass"<sup>50</sup>, "a turkey whipped by an armless dwarf"<sup>51</sup> and "the sewing machine and the umbrella on the dissecting table"<sup>52</sup>. What is unbelievable, disgusting and phantasmatic is perhaps an additional explanation of the concept of the event, which here coincides with the contemporary understanding of naked life. The horizon of the future shifted by Derrida beyond the possibility of predicting precisely in this element of Tschumi's practices is approximated to the more current need to take into account the importance of carnality and its role in thinking. Events taking place in the park should therefore also be understood as reactions of bodies injured and infiltrated with irremovable pain which are bandaged and treated in this place by a specific environment. The wound created by the event is equally treated and torn. In Neoplatonic philosophy, since Plotinus' time, the anguish of the soul connected to the body has been emphasized, while the only real anguish concerns only carnality. The environment created by the designer does not so much relieve pain, but detaches suffering from everyday life saturated with prevention and releases it in a purified, festive form.

Pavilions are the most spectacular component of the park and they express the idea of permutation and variation most fully, but perhaps its greater value is the spatial words, which temporarily appear in interactions between the structure of the park and the events provoked by it. Their nowhere recorded series create the scenario of a new community, in which a native always hostile to a stranger and an immigrant threatened each time by a native, combine in the sense of randomness of their fate and the inherent original rootlessness and insignificance. Each of the new, previously unknown words, peculiar, accidental and isolated, tells of a possible event that has no power to change political or social reality, and nor does it even make a small contribution to a possible change, but nevertheless gives it a chance to come. Words and barely emerging events are ahead of the future, against which collective fear protects. The Park has an unquestionable political goal, which is to create "a transition space, a form of access to new cultural and social forms [...]"<sup>53</sup>, or "giving place to a concrete politics and ethics"<sup>54</sup>.

### The political nature of an urban laceration

The political nature of the park combines current features of collective life with metaphysical reflection on thinking, creation, beginning, change, invention and place. In any case, the starting point for their research could be the specific features of the Parc de La Villette if it were not for the fact that these features bring openness to problems rather than being the presentation of any conclusions. The author of the project clearly declared restraint towards treating his work as the embodiment of metaphysical notions<sup>55</sup>, although at the same time he himself attempted to do so. Also commentators, such as Brigitte Weltman-Aron, stress that the park makes it almost impossible to interpret its principles as a manifestation of pre-coded content and inhibits its reading based on visual components<sup>56</sup>. Therefore, although it can be assumed that the work in question represents a distance from the imaging of philosophy and contrasts such aspirations with the creation of an environment of becoming of thought, and replaces the reception of the realized assumption with its happening, experience and participation, one cannot ignore its programmatic values. Although the work oscillates between its reality and being a theory of the place and leans to the latter side, yet depreciated contents and senses, including political ones, are inscribed by users and interpreters. The first portion of them comes from the negations contained in the work.

Tschumi declared that the methods of its design constitute the reverse of concentrating, centralizing and totalizing strategies, and instead are distracting, questioning structuring concepts, and in contrast to the principles of functionalism – they create a program of potential events<sup>57</sup>. However, the oppositions were not absolutized and did not create the rules of anarchitecture<sup>58</sup>, nor were they a new style, but the putting the archaic principles of architecture into vibration. By violating the foundations of architecture, they gave themselves into the power of movements that were more deeply rooted than what was usually considered to be the principles of this field. Plato spoke about the movement shaking the *chôra* and separating the elements, thus initially ordering them. **Martin Heidegger**, on the other hand, wrote that the harmony of vibrations results from that “the intimacy of this trembling requires the most abyssal fissure, and in the latter the inexhaustibility of being might be inventively thought by way of surmises”<sup>59</sup>. Thus, it may be said that the transition from negation to affirmation takes place through the reawakening of the violent forces forming the fundamental layers of architecture. Their lava-covered tradition of eruptional power is being released anew and at the same time positively used.

Renewal of the architecture takes place with the participation of its users. The unusual structure of the park, based on archaic powers, encourages active behaviour of the visitor to the area, turns an ordi-



<sup>55</sup> See **B. Tschumi**, *Abstract Mediation and Strategy*, [in:] *idem*, *Architecture and Disjunction...*, pp. 200–204.

<sup>56</sup> **B. Weltman-Aron**, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>57</sup> **B. Tschumi**, *Disjunctions...*, p. 212; *idem*, *Six...*, pp. 251–254.

<sup>58</sup> See **J. Derrida**, *Point de folie – Maintenant l'architecture*, “AA Files” 1986, no. 12, p. 69: „These »folies« destabilize meaning, the meaning of meaning, the signifying ensemble of his powerful architectonics. They put in question, dislocate, destabilise or deconstruct the edifice of this configuration. It will be said that they are »madness« in this. For in a polemos which is without aggression, without the destructive drive that would still betray a reactive affect within the hierarchy, they do battle with the very meaning of architectural meaning, as it has been bequeathed to us and as we still inhabit it. We should not avoid the issue; if this configuration presides over what in the West is called architecture, do these folies not raze it to the ground? Do they not lead back to the desert of anarchitecture, a zero degree of architectural writing where this writing would lose itself, henceforth without finality, aesthetic aura, fundamentals, hierarchical principles or symbolic signification, in short, in a prose made of abstract, neutral, inhuman, useless, uninhabitable and meaningless volumes? Precisely not. The folies affirm, and engage their affirmation beyond this ultimately annihilating, secretly nihilistic repetition of metaphysical architecture”.

<sup>59</sup> **M. Heidegger**, *Contributions to Philosophy. (Of the Event)*, transl. R. Rojcewicz, D. Vallega-Neu, Bloomington–Indianapolis 2012, p. 193; *idem*, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, [in:] *idem*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 65, Frankfurt 1989, § 127 Die Zerklüftung, p. 244.



 <sup>60</sup> T. Rickert, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

nary stroller into a co-designer who, while passing through the area, makes a choice from its incoherent fragments and constructs his or her own, sensible but individualised whole for his or her needs and in a closed period of time. The visitors are not guided through the park in accordance with indicated avenues and attractions, but placed in a situation controlled not by the contents of the past or present, but instead by the unknown and future. They are prompted to lean towards something that is not only unexpected or even dangerous, but above all not yet existing. He is set to move towards an unpredictable configuration of fragments, by assumption different from any already existing one.

Moving between different conditions of time, i.e. between the irritated past, the unsatisfactory present and fearful future, is also transferred to the spatial features of the park, which at the same time is and is not a place. If one accepts that a place must have borders, graspability, intelligibility, visibility or obviousness, then the park undoubtedly denies these determinants of location. An amorphous, choric park gives, instead of directly a place, rather a place for a place, encourages reflection on the place, changes understanding of what it is to place, *recte* dwelling and citizenship. Accepting otherness on a metaphysical level it opens this specific, modified place for otherness, for someone else ethnically or culturally, but also it turns the native into the same guest as the emigrant, equalizes them in their rights and creates a framework for a more advanced kind of community. The park is a way of coming of diversity, a place full of movement, which gives protection to the stranger and assimilates them to nativity.

### **Spatiality and location of inventions**

The transition to any change in the area of established principles of functioning of the community or thinking evokes a sense of horror among the members of the community as a symptom of approaching the abyss. However, the desired stabilization is impossible to the same extent as is the impossibility of an inscrutable goal of changeability. Uncertainty is a hidden ground for all organisational and intellectual achievements. The consolidation of acts of thought and orderly action requires a reference to a certain beginning, which is not so much given in advance, but rather demonstrated anew in complex processes of moving backward to move forward. The beginning is thus in motion and its mobility influences the form of what is to be understood as a principle.

In his research on invention, Rickert noted that inventing novelty, or thinking in general, has not only bodily and sexual features, as Kristeva emphasized, but also spatial ones<sup>60</sup>. Many philosophers saw transcendental values in the intellect, while the claims of the

American researcher of rhetorical invention were directed towards describing the relationship between the intellect and its external repositories, especially with the place. Rickert's view was therefore profoundly different from the traditional one, in which the independence of the transcendent self from all dependencies was emphasized. In Rickert's deliberations, thinking gained its exteriority by finding its *loci*. The mind of an individual is therefore seen here, on the one hand, as inseparable with the body and, on the other hand, as interacting with the external environment, which may also be the choric Parc de La Villette. Thus, sometimes the place of invention and thinking can be an area of a very material character. A location of this kind is a medium that disperses the intellect and shows thinking as spatialisation (*espacement*).

Events taking place in the park, or the park as an event, reveal their peculiarity through a clash of strangeness and familiarity and blurring the differences between them, which are unseen outside the park. Situations of this kind had already taken place in French society before, but no other place has been called to show them more spectacularly (*phaínesthai*<sup>61</sup>). The Park as a matrix (*ekmageion*<sup>62</sup>) "future democracy" and "coming community" does not do much politically, but only tunes for a certain possibility, introduces only a certain new, harmonizing rhythm (*rhuthmos/rhythm*<sup>63</sup>), remaining above all an active void, a desert of all potential. The choric park behaves like a special kind of mirror, which makes visible what is unclearly possible and, above all, impossible. When ordinary mirrors do not reflect imaginary beings, this mirror depicts the nightmare saturated with anguish of what does not exist, but threatens to appear. The political change placed in this way is at the metaphysical level a pure invention, evoking itself and inventing itself<sup>64</sup>. This is mainly due to favourable spatial circumstances. In the area of a certain active non-existence, affinities between the articulation of space, discursive structures and desired changes leading to the widening of the membership of the political community can be seen. The analogy inscribed in the place occurs as a kind of submission to the orderly vibrations typical of the *chôra*.



<sup>61</sup> *Φαίνεσθαι*, *Tim.* 52e. See N. Isar, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> *Ἐκμαγεῖον*, *Tim.* 50c. See. E. Bianchi, *op. cit.* s. 127–130; N. Isar, *op. cit.*, s. 40.

<sup>63</sup> Plato, *Nomoi*, 664e. L. Burchill, *op. cit.*, p. 32. It should be noted that the term "rhythmos" was derived from the word "flow" and did not correspond to the later term "rhythm"; see B. Kowalzig, *Broken Rhythms in Plato's "Laws": Materialising Social Time in the Khoros*, [in:] *Performance and Culture in Plato's "Laws"*, ed. A.-E. Pepponi, Cambridge 2013, p. 182. See also L. Brisson, *Platon, les mots et les mythes. Comment et pourquoi Platon nomma le mythe?*, Paris 1994, pp. 88–90; P. Dayan, *Derrida Writing Architectural or Musical Form*, "Paragraph" 2008, no. 3.

<sup>64</sup> See T. Rickert, *op. cit.*, p. 263: "invention inventing itself".

#### Słowa kluczowe

projekt Parku de La Villette, koncepcja *chôry*, filozofia Platona

#### Keywords

project of the Parc de La Villette, concept of *chôra*, philosophy of Plato

#### References

1. Bator Joanna, *Julia Kristeva: kobieta i "symboliczna rewolucja"*, "Teksty Drugie" 2000, no. 6
2. Isar Nicoletta, *Chôra: Tracing the Presence*, "Review of European Studies" 2009, no. 1



3. **Kristeva Julia**, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, transl. M. Waller, introd. L. S. Roudiez, New York 1984.
4. **Margaroni Maria**, "The Lost Foundation": Kristeva's Chora and Its Ambiguous Legacy, "Hypatia. A Journal of Feminist Philosophy" 2005, no. 1.
5. **Ogrodnik Bogdan**, *O współczesnych rozwinięciach platońskiej kategorii chora*, „Studia Whiteheadiana” 2006, no. 2.
6. **Rickert Thomas**, *Toward the Chōra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention*, „Philosophy and Rhetoric” 2007.
7. *The Timaeus of Plato*, transl. R. D. Archer-Hind, London – New York 1888.
8. **Tschumi Bernard**, *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge [Massachusetts] – London 1996.
9. **Weltman-Aron Brigitte**, *Rhizome and Khōra: Designing Garden with Deleuze and Derrida*, "Bulletin de la Societé Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française" 2005, no. 2.

---

**Dr. habil. Cezary Was, wascezar@gmail.com**

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław. Curator of the Museum of Architecture. Author of the books: *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej (Antinomies of the contemporary sacred architecture)*, 2008), *Architektura a dekonstrukcja. Przypadek Petera Eisenmana i Bernarda Tschumiego (Architecture and deconstruction. The case of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi)*, 2015) and dozens of articles on phenomena of the ancient and modern culture.

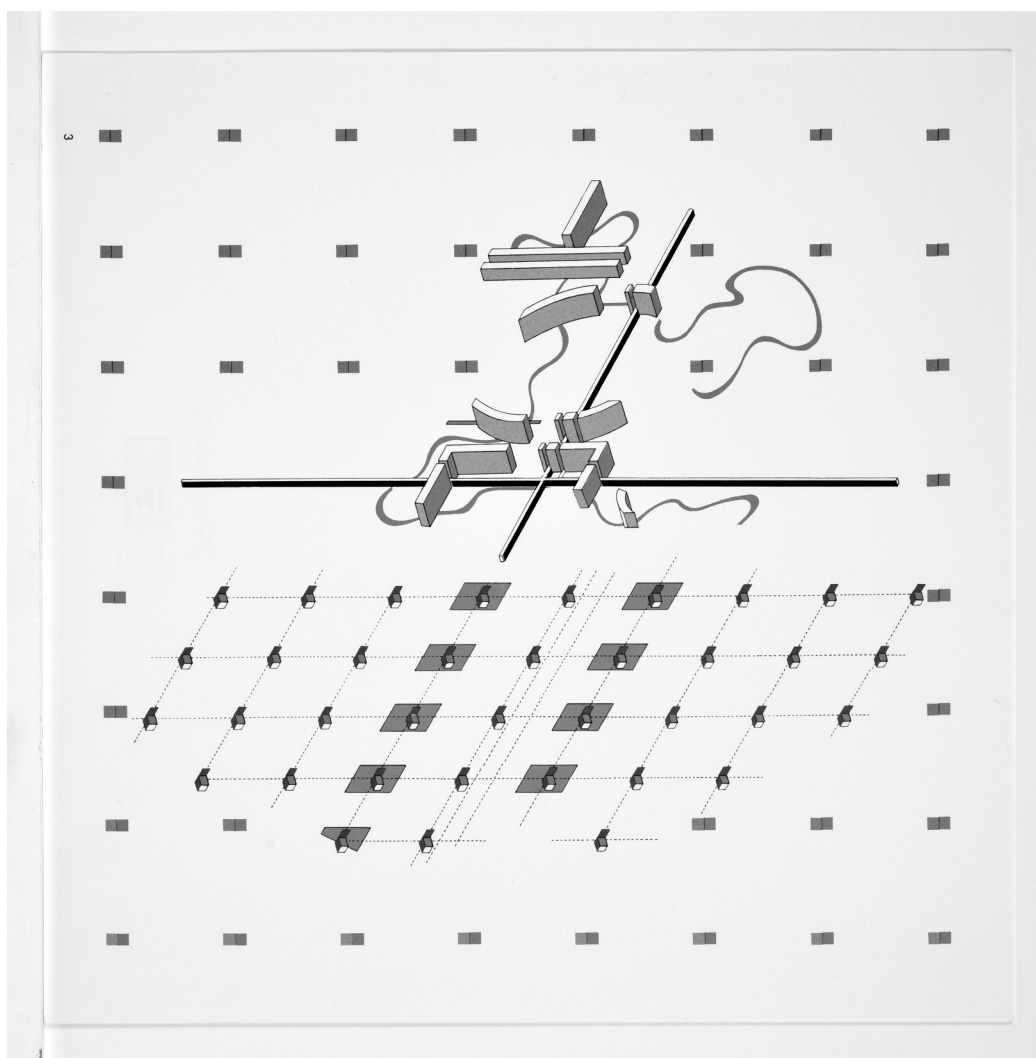
### Summary

**CEZARY WAS (University of Wrocław) / The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher. The Parc de La Villette in Paris in the context of philosophy of chōra**

In the period from the Antiquity to the Renaissance, the dialogue *Timaeus* was the most frequently commented work of Plato. At present, the most frequently discussed is the issue of the *chōra* included in it, which aroused fascination among philosophers, researchers of rhetoric, religion, feminism, and moreover, architecture. The work on the *chōra* also influenced the development of the interpretation of the Parc de La Villette, among which the topics related to the beginning and the change were highlighted. In early uses of the word "chōra" in Greek, as in Homer's XVIII book of *Iliad*, it meant both dancing and a place to dance. On this occasion, it can be seen that it is not possible to determine which phenomenon took precedence in the creation of the name. It cannot be denied, however, that the word concerned a specific movement, as if circular and returning to an indefinable beginning. Despite the gaining more and more general meanings, the word *chōra* has retained its connection with the dance of people on the threshing floor, the dance of bees (*choros melton*) or the dance of stars

(*choros astron*). In *Timaeus*, the *chôra* is a space filled with movement with an effect similar to shaking the sieve to husk the grain: it separates similar elements from the dissimilar ones. The juxtaposition of the Parc de La Villette and the *chôra* already at this stage leads to the suggestion that the park was treated by the architect as a place of dynamic changes leading to the establishment of new social solutions. In his statements, the architect confirmed that the park was to be a space of new politics and ethics. The book by Julia Kristeva *La Révolution du langage poétique* contributed to the spread of the belief that works of art can play a role as factors of political revolution. In this work, the author put forward the thesis that the *chôra* is a kind of space, the character of which has a destructive influence on attempts to conclude language games. The *chôra* gives beginning to words, but at the same time, by leaving a trace of this beginning it forces us to renew their meanings. The *chôra* understood in this way, turns out to be an irremovable beginning, to which one has to return all the time. Kristeva found manifestations of the *chôra*'s activity in avant-garde French poetry, to which she attributed the role of a mediator between criticism of metaphysics and aspirations for social change. The *chôra*, violating the language, introduces some voids into it, as if traces of the abyss, which direct the consciousness towards understanding the necessity of political changes. The Parc de La Villette was to pursue similar objectives in the city space. In his essays, Bernard Tschumi considered the problems of creating spaces that would give rise to a radical democracy. The proposed rebellious spaces should have the characteristics of a void, in which contradictory forces would occur as forms of pure activity. The means of achieving this goal was to concentrate contradictions and make them visible. The Parc de La Villette was supposed to collect differences as indelible and at the same time by showing them it was supposed to raise awareness of the social world as a conglomerate of differences. Saturation of the space of the park with subversive values results from the character of this space suppressed in the consciousness, as well as from the social diversity which has not been taken into account so far.

The main contradictions contained in space relate to the division that exists between its presentation as a mental problem and a sensual one. The park was the deliberate creation of a place that transcends such a division and creates a separate space for negotiation between architectural theories and its practical applications. The purpose of the park was to become a place of future events, which would not hide their conflicting character coming from diversity of both space and society. The method of composition usually aimed at achieving a harmonious whole has been replaced by Tschumi with a system of juxtapositions of non-coherent elements or those resulting from variations and transformations. Tschumi did not seek direct influence on politics in the Parc de La Villette, but made room for thinking about the possibilities of the future. He introduced problems rather than showed solutions to them. The task of the park was to put the principles of architecture into a kind of vibration that would inspire users to participate in the new community.



B. Tschumi, *La Case Vide: La Villette 1985, London 1986, Fig. 3*

Quart 2019, 2  
PL ISSN 1896-4133  
[s. 89-119]

# The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher

The Parc de La Villette in Paris in the context of philosophy of *chôra*

## Part III

Cezary Wąs

University of Wrocław



<sup>1</sup> See E. J. Khamara, *Leibniz' Theory of Space: A Reconstruction*, "The Philosophical Quarterly" 1993, no. 173; R. Arthur, *Space and Relativity in Newton and Leibniz*, "British Journal for the Philosophy of Science" 1994, no. 45. The difference between the two authors is not obvious, despite appearances. Khamara undertakes to defend Leibniz's position and ultimately only states: "I believe I have shown that Leibniz' relative theory of space, as reconstructed, is subtler and more resting that it is commonly taken to be: it is not open to some of allegedly serious objection that are currently held against it" (E. J. Khamara, *op. cit.*, p. 488). R. Arthur's (*op. cit.*, p. 239) conclusions on the superiority of Leibniz's views are similarly cautious: "[M]y final conclusion is that Leibniz's approach to space is to be preferred just because it does not hypostatize the mathematical".

<sup>2</sup> I. Newton, *Opticks: Or A Treatise of the Reflections, Refractions, Inflexions and Colours of Light. The Second Edition, with Additions*, London 1718, t. 3, pp. 344-345.

<sup>3</sup> I. Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and His System of The World*, transl. A. Motte [1729], revised F. Cajori, Cambridge 1934, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Leibniz's Fourth Paper [2 June 1716]; Being an Answer to dr. Clarke's Third Reply, Fife Letters to Samuel Clarke, [in:] *The Philosophical Works of Leibniz*, transl. G. M. Duncan, New Haven 1890, p. 253; see also G. W. Leibniz, *Letters to Clarke, Fourth Letter*, [in:] *Readings in Modern Philosophy*, vol. 1: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and Associated Text, ed. R. Ariew, E. Watkins, Indianapolis 2000, p. 312: "space is only an order of things, as time also is, and not at all an absolute being".

<sup>5</sup> Leibniz's fifth paper [18 August 1716], Fife Letters to Samuel Clarke, [in:] *The Philosophical Works of Leibniz...*, p. 272; see also E. Vailati, *Leibniz and Clarke: A Study of Their Correspondence*, New York 1997, p. 117.

<sup>6</sup> B. Tschumi, *Questions of Space: The Pyramid and the Labyrinth (or Architectural Paradox)*, "Studio International" 1975, nr 190. I use the version included in the anthology of texts by that author - *Architecture and Disjunction*, Cambridge [Massachusetts] - London 1996.

## Between space and its origins

The space that was created in the Parc de La Villette is impossible to define, because none of the fields of knowledge has a commonly accepted definition of space. Discussions on this subject indicate that at present it is possible rather merely to comment on positions on the question of space than to move closer to a definition without contradiction. The fields of mathematics, physics and the humanities use concepts of space that cannot be agreed on a single basis. It should also be noted that none of the major disputes in this matter has been resolved, such as the conflict between the relational position of Gottfried Leibniz and Isaac Newton's substantive approach (represented in this discussion by Samuel Clarke)<sup>1</sup>. Undoubtedly Newton's views contained in *Scholium* (2) to Definition VIII, and in *Opticks* (Query XXVIII<sup>2</sup>), in particular the sentence that "absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to anything external, remains always similar and immovable"<sup>3</sup> seem to be obsolete, but we should remember that the English author treated his concept as abstraction and in the same fragment also wrote about the existence of relative space that was a measure of divine space or purely mathematical one. Therefore, it cannot be denied that also in Newton there are references to subjective space. Leibniz's opinions, on the other hand, completely ignore absolute reality, which is reflected in fragments of his fourth and fifth letters to Clarke stating that "space is only an order of things, as time also is, and not at all an absolute being"<sup>4</sup>, space itself is not an absolute reality"<sup>5</sup>.

Tschumi was well aware of the fact that each of the basic suggestions about space prompts the architect to act in a slightly different way. The complexity, multiplicity and problematic nature of the approaches to space was demonstrated by his extensive set of questions included in his essay *Questions of Space*<sup>6</sup>. It contains 65 questions, each of which six remain unanswered:

1.0. Is space a material thing in which all material are to be located? 1.1. If space is a material thing, does it have boundaries? 1.11. If space has boundaries, is there another space outside those boundaries? 1.12. If space does not have boundaries, do things then extend infinitely? 1.21. As every finite extend of space is infinitely divisible (since every space can contain smaller spaces), can an infinite collection of spaces then form a finite space ? 1.13. In any case, if space is an extension of matter, can one part of space be distinguished from another?

To this point of his questionnaire the author seems to ask questions in the substance paradigm characteristic of Newton, and whose elements are inherited by a small part of modern physics, including Albert Einstein's "special theory of relativity" (STR). However, the "general theory of relativity" (GTR) approximates relational positions and occupies an intermediate position between this view and



the substantial position. Tschumi's next questions enter logically into the world of relational approaches, which were advocated by Leibniz and now also by a decisive part of the participants of the dispute among physicists.

1.2. If space is not matter, is it merely the sum of all spatial relations between material things?

The relational approach opens the way for asking questions of a different kind, similar to Kant's views:

1.3. If space is neither matter nor a set of objective relations between things, is it something subjective with which the mind categorizes things? 1.31. If the structure of the mind imposes an *a priori* form (that precedes all experience) to the perception of the external world, is space such a form? 1.32. If space is such a form, does it have precedence over all other perceptions?

The last question should be supplemented by a direct question: does the perception of space precede the perception of time, is it the other way round, or are they parallel to each other?

The next issue relates to the active or passive character of the space and can be included in the following question:

1.4. If, "etymologically" space is both making space distinct and stating the precise nature of space, is this an essential paradox of space?

So whether defining is an act of marking the end of a certain space and separating it from some more originary form of space, or rather, does it mean recording space in its consciousness reflections, i.e. in words and concepts?

The above problem found its consequences in question 1.5. considering the nature of the conduct of the architect, who may think that they have defined the space by giving it distinctive values, but cannot escape from seeing and naming what they have done. With the same thought, Tschumi linked the doubt as to whether the architect's ability to give artistic qualities to space resonates with our ability to clarify the nature of space. On the one hand, therefore, we are dealing with developing space, expanding it with new properties, and on the other hand, we are affected by the tendency to link space with the awareness of its borders, with its intellectual closure. This leads to the question

1.6. Is architecture the concept of space, the space, and the definition of space?

The next question repeats the anguish of philosophers since Plato's time concerning the way of transition from idea to reality:



1.61. If the concept of space is not a space, is the materialization of the concept of space a space?

But can we be sure that the concept of space is not a space? For can we perceive space without concept? Does the concept not have spatial properties? If it has such properties, what creates these properties? Are they non-material? These reservations are summarised in a question:

1.611. Is conceptual space then the space of which material is the concept?

Even if we decide that a concept is only an imagination or an idea, it is however impossible to escape the impression that these unrealities are part of the constitution of reality. Thus, the concept Tschumi wrote about has also features of materiality, and these features can be components of space both when we acknowledge its materiality and when we accept its conceptuality. What is a feature of something cannot be separated from this something by the barrier of unreality. However, if we insist on the separation of conceptual space from natural space (if such a space exists), the question remains open: what is its component? What makes up a thought? Is the thought multi-component or one-component? Ultimately, what is the material of the concept (thought)? What is the range of reality (materiality) of the thoughts? A further doubt was formulated by the author as follows:

1.612. Incidentally, is the experience of the materialization of the concept of space the experience of space?

In the above issue it is necessary to ignore Kant's solution that space is a "pure" intuition preceding an "empirical" one, because here is considered a case when a theoretician and practitioner of architecture (so Tschumi himself) comes up with a concept of space that he needs in a specific case, then produces it and asks himself: what in this situation the viewer (including himself) experiences. Does one experience real space (after all, it was created), or does one experience a materialisation of an individualised concept of space, or maybe one experiences a certain unreal space, so still conceptual space (regardless of the fact that it has been made visible)? If one assumes that "conceptual space" is only a metaphorical notion from the area of art or humanities, it leads to the question: are there no connections of such space with real space, and is there any real space independent of the concept of real space? Which concept of real space is most reasonable?

Question 1.6.3 takes us to the level of an important component of modernist architecture ideology, which was contained in Sigfried



Giedion's work *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941)<sup>7</sup>. The Swiss researcher on architecture formulated an influential thesis assuming the development of architecture from shaping it as closed solids (cutting off from external spaces), through forms of hollow solids (in which internal space has already played a more serious role), to contemporary buildings, in which internal space freely connects with external space. Giedion's suggestive theory ignores the following problem: what is actually the material modelled by the architect? So: are the space of a closed solid and the empty space on its external side parts of the same, uniform space? However, the space understood in such a way would be far from approaches inspired by contemporary physics, and after all, Giedion inclined towards them. To understand space as an empty, neutral container seems to be outdated in this situation and led to the question:

1.7. If Euclidean space is restricted to a three-dimensional lump of matter, is non-Euclidean space to be restricted to a series of events in four-dimensional space-time?

The problem of the above question is related to the combining of discoveries in mathematics and geometry with the problems of physics and astronomy. As a consequence of the development of new approaches to geometry (made, among others, by Nikolai Lobachevsky, János Bolyai, Georg Riemann or David Hilbert), new images of space (including topological or affine space) were defined, which found their reference in mechanics and cosmology. At the beginning of the 20th century, Hermann Minkowski and his followers used the notion of space-time and, more specifically, pseudo-Euclidean space-time in reference to GTR and pseudo-Riemannian spacetime to STR to describe the results of the general and specific theory of relativity. In a certain generalization it can be assumed that in modern physics space-time is a collection of events. However, the event, also colloquially understood, is defined simultaneously in its spatial and temporal dimensions.

Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, when physicists and mathematicians discussed intensively the concepts of space, the artists made attempts to adapt them to new artistic ideas. Tschumi's architecture, consistently described by him as "events", combines many contemporary philosophies of event<sup>8</sup> with theories of space, leading in consequence to a situation in which each of his works must be interpreted as inseparably spatial, temporal and material, simultaneously produced and perceived. It can be described as a kind of oscillatory movement between properties that are usually perceived separately, so between the purely sensual visibility of architecture and its presentation as an object or understanding as a spatial and time phenomenon. The features of reality, when separated in discourses, cease to enter into conflict with each other in inner



<sup>7</sup> S. Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture. The Growth of a New Tradition*, Cambridge 1941.

<sup>8</sup> M. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [1936–1938], [in:] *idem*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65, Frankfurt am Main 1994; *idem*, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, transl. P. Emad, K. Maly, Bloomington 1999; re-translated as *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, transl. R. Rojcewicz, D. Vallega-Neu, Bloomington 2012.



<sup>9</sup> D. Hollier, *La Prise de la Concorde: Essais sur Georges Bataille*, Paris 1974.

experience and after turning to their material sources. The combination of space with something other than the creations of the intellect leads to yet other problems. The second group of questions contained in the *Questions of Space* concerns the relationship between space and experience. It seems reasonable that an architect investigates relationships of this kind in a situation where architecture is defined as the art of shaping space and at the same time influencing the sensations of the recipients. The reception of architecture, including the types of sensations that it can provide, has rarely been the subject of consistent reflection in architectural research. It can be concluded that Tschumi's questions go beyond the repertoire of problems most often related to the tasks assigned to works in this field. When the subject of reflection becomes a work as exceptional as the Parc de La Villette, which was deliberately assigned the mission of transforming its users, the problems of experiencing architecture must be developed more deep than has been the case so far.

The questions of experience raised by Tschumi are linked to the troublesome legacy that Georges Bataille's concepts have left to French post-constructuralist thinkers. Disturbing observations of that thinker living on the sidelines drew readers' attention, first of all, by transgressing some well-established beliefs in philosophy. During Tschumi's intellectual adolescence, the views of this little-known worker of libraries in Paris, Carpentras and Orleans began to be discussed by Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, among others. Many of Tschumi's essays also refer to Bataille's inquiries, either directly or through Denis Hollier's book<sup>9</sup>.

In the colloquial view experience was understood as a set of data collected by an individual and having features of directness and authenticity. The more philosophically treated experience, however, was similar to phenomenological proceedings and was a kind of thought attempt, in which the subject directed themselves to a specific set of collected information that could strengthen their identity. Directed reflection, as if the intentional focus of attention on experiences, after subtracting non-personal values from them, was selected as a component of the sense of one's own life and configured with other experiences into a story about one's own consciousness. Such an understanding of experience has been questioned in the milieu of French thinkers most often referred to as post-structuralists.

Barthes, Foucault, Kristeva, or Sollers, and initially also Derrida, despite their fascination with Bataille's writing, doubted whether the individual could have and collect direct experiences, independent of specific cultural or linguistic models. In their opinion, even a carefully profiled individuality by an individual had to be shaped by the intellectual patterns that preceded it. The adopted position contradicted the earlier concept emphasizing the sovereignty of the subject. In European culture, a model of an individual who needed independence



from the community for their constitution has been developed since modernity. Individuality required a strong self capable of controlling the accumulated experiences and separating them from the experiences of other people. The activity of a strong subject referred to the outside world, which was understood as a set of objects. The objects of thoughts were treated by the subject with the same determination. Such an ideal of functioning of an individual person was the effect of such a long-term development that it presented itself as obvious and natural. The opposition to the indisputability of such a standard was most strongly expressed in Derrida's opinion indicating that it was determined by the metaphysics of presence<sup>10</sup>. In his criticism, experience could neither refer to something as artificially constructed as being, the world, life or other people, nor be supported by something as unstable and diverse as one's own consciousness. Derrida, like the post-structuralist milieu, doubted an internally undifferentiated subject capable of penetrating the essence of things, controlling them and, at the same time, fully identifying with oneself. In return, he proposed to consider the self as much less self-confident, albeit striving for an unattainable internal cohesion. In this position, however, some cracks began to appear, which again drew attention to Bataille's concept of "inner experience" (*l'expérience intérieure*). The importance of experience was renewed in a situation where it focused on itself, but separately the need for better knowledge about its complex shape and functioning increased.

In a modified sense, the consciousness of the subject, of which experience is a part, can be understood as a kind of membrane between its activity directed outside (towards the world) and inside itself. Directing itself to the outside, the experience can be active and passive, penetrates the world, but it is also influenced by it. Part of the cognitive movement can be directed towards transcendence or metaphysics and discover the richness of impossibility, errors in fundamental assumptions or the radical uncertainty of the communication sphere. It was the path of poststructuralist thinkers and Derrida. Bataille, on the other hand, turned to the study of consciousness inside himself, but achieved different goals than the Christian mystics. While they were discovering within themselves a God, he found there only a bottomless, though active, abyss. By deepening into the inner experience, he reached for forbidden zones of immanence, elements of impure transcendence in psyche, as if belonging to the world of underground gods. The discoveries of the integrity and sovereignty of the externalized and recordable self, made by his French successors, turned out to largely ignore his revelations concerning the fouled world of the inner self. By not so much cleansing the body and thoughts, but rather overusing them both, he discovered the uncanny, strangeness and monstrosity inherent in the depths of the psyche. This other Otherness, however dangerous and destructive, is also life-giving and can be treated as an unexploited multiple-



<sup>10</sup> J. Derrida, *Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas*, [in:] *idem, Writing and Difference*, transl., introd., additional notes A. Bass, Chicago 1978, p. 152: "Has not the concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence?"; as cit. in: M. Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, Berkeley 2005, p. 364. Jay then (*ibidem*, pp. 365–366) quotes R. Terada's opinions that describe Derrida's sceptical stance towards "centered subject". He also recalls Derrida's view from his essay on Bataille: "That which indicates itself as interior experience is not an experience, because it is related to no presence, to no plenitude, but only on the 'impossible' it 'undergoes' in torture" (J. Derrida, *From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve*, [in:] *idem, Writing and Difference...*; as cit. in: M. Jay, *op. cit.*, p. 367).

ity, a radically multiplying madness necessary for the development of an individual or society. When transferring Bataille's observations to the philosophy of science in terms of Imre Lakatos and Paul Feyerabend, one can recall their positive assessment of the proliferation of errors for progress in science. It seems that Bataille proclaimed a similar truth about the beneficial sides of the multiplication of possibilities beyond any measure. At the same time, his emphasis on the corporeality of the spiritual abyss deprived it of its entanglement in dialectics and resisted attempts at an organized and rational explanation. It opened up possibilities of functioning beyond metaphysics and beyond discourse.

Bataille's doctrine also had an ethical and political dimension, persuading to abandon the cult of unity and to move towards a community of increased sovereignty of unstable individuals. It is at this stage of interpreting experience that Tschumi and his variations of the Parc de La Villette pavilions are located. Their multiplication, senselessness and defectiveness are a visualization and realization of the desire for otherness. They are not so much a representation of a certain theory, but rather an exposition of pure inner consciousness, a manifestation of a certain er(r)oticism and disturbances of space. However, this is only a starting point for questions posed by Tschumi to the relationships between space and experience.

The architect's initial question concerned the perception (and therefore also experience) of space and the consideration of possible differences between individual perceptions of space:

2.0. Is the perception of space common to everyone?

It can be assumed that this question has been put in a situation of doubt about the full belonging of individual perception to the universal, transcendental self. However, if one assumes that it is possible to have an individual concept of space, then such a situation generates a question: is there, behind a separate vision of space, a whole world dependent on it and to what extent do individual experiences constitute such a private cosmos?

Experience is a component of the understanding of space, but it is also a process, so it is variable. The consequences are suggested by the question:

2.2. If space consciousness is based on one's respective experience, then does the perception of space involve a gradual construction rather than a ready-made schema?

A community of experience cannot be ruled out, as well as the archaic models it contains; then



2.21. Does this gradual construction contain elements that have a degree of invariance, such as archetypes?

Also in the understanding of the park there are references to the mythical past. Is it possible for an individual to remove them from his or her association pool?

Acceptance of Kant's understanding of space makes it universal, but can't the common value be manipulated and directed towards the socially desired goals of today? Such a problem prompted Tschumi to ask a question:

2.4. If space is a basic a priori category of consciousness, independent of matter, is it an instrument of knowledge?

If we acquire knowledge through an a priori category, does it affect our sensual, emotional, and mental experiences? The next question was heading in a similar direction:

2.5. Is an instrument of knowledge the medium of experience?

Experience is treated as a more practical than theoretical matter, therefore:

2.51. Since it can be said that experience is contained within the nature of practice, is space inextricably bound up with practice?

The practice of space is saturated with variability, so space must change with each work. This would give the architect certain possibilities to influence the audience. One should ask: does such a case take place in the Parc de La Villette?

The question also returns: to what extent can theory and practice be separated? Shouldn't a finished object be situated between theory and practice? It is also a question about the ontological status of the Parc de La Villette, whose practical powers are derived from the theoretical potential.

2.52. Architecturally, if space is the medium for the materialization of theory, is a space the materialization of the architectural concept?

2.7. Is the experience of space the experience of the materialization of the concept of space? Or of any concept?

Question 2.7 applies specifically to the work in question because it is not so much a spatial development of the concept of space as a spatial development of other concepts. But aren't concepts also endowed with a certain spatiality? For such a thesis should be approached slowly.

Usually the concepts of space are linked with geometrical concepts, but this cannot be proven to be necessary. The concepts of

space can also be based on sensing or experiencing non-geometric space. Tschumi expressed this in another question:

2.71. Can a geometrical spatial concept be replaced by a concept based on one's experience of space?

This stage of investigating problems brings to mind the question: what else apart from space has spatial features? Let's assume that experience can also have spatial properties. Therefore, one should ask:

2.72. Does the experience of space determine the space of experience?

The experience, as Bataille emphasized, has bodily properties and even mystics, when they proclaimed the appearance of God in the soul, they expressed it as a touch. So in question 2.73. the problem is: "does (architectural) space exist independently of the experiencing body?". And developing this question: does the world exist without bodies experiencing it? What exists when there are no bodies to experience? Completely rejecting an independent space is quite difficult to imagine, but it would also be problematic to treat it too strongly as subordinate to the body.

The inseparability of space and bodies and the impossibility of negating their separate existence become apparent. Thus:

2.8. If space is neither an external object nor an internal experience (made of impressions, sensations and feelings), are space and ourselves inseparable?

This question prompts us to look for a solution in spatial concepts other than the previous ones, as the older ones only lead to insoluble complexities. However, it should be remembered that space is a concept common to many fields of knowledge, which, nonetheless, raises the question:

2.81. Are objective social space and subjective inner space then inextricably bound together?

But if space is an existential concept, can it not be assumed that more precise definitions than those made on the basis of the natural sciences can be derived from the humanities or social sciences? Tschumi poses a question that as if goes back Heidegger:

2.9. Is space thus one of the structures that expresses our "being" in the world?



### *Spacing as analogon of the chôra*

As Louise Burchill noticed, the term spacing (*espacement*) is key in Derrida's philosophy and is combined with other philosophical terms characteristic of this philosopher, such as *différance*, *écriture* or *deconstruction*<sup>11</sup>. Developing her thesis, Burchill stated that *différance* was combined by Derrida with the simultaneous introduction of time and space, which made *différance* "the becoming-time of space and becoming-space of time"<sup>12</sup>. About writing (*écriture*), in turn, Derrida wrote that spacing is its "fundamental property"<sup>13</sup>. This term returned once again in the definition of deconstruction when it was considered to be its most basic term<sup>14</sup>.

Tracing Burchill's analyses allows us to see the entanglement of the issue of spatiality in important philosophical problems from Democritus to Heidegger, but above all it gives rise to further discoveries relating to the ways in which the Parc de La Villette affects users and its role as a political factor. When following Burchill's studies, it should be remembered that for Derrida *espacement* means, first of all, an interval or "in-between", which should be treated as an indication of the so-called irreducible externality. In his various texts, Derrida demonstrated how impossible it is to constitute any identity as something closed only in interiority and separated from the aggressive influences of exteriority. Thus, every territory, of a soul or a park, can be tracked as an area of recording transient imprints of exteriority and thus as a modification of exteriority. The interior would be just a form of the exterior. An isolated area is primarily a place where attacks of what comes from the outside take place, and leaves inside only traces that are not configurable in any permanent order. The park, when looking at its initial shape, devoid of arrangements, gave a field for recording transient inscriptions, but also evoked a tendency to write them. Such a situation reminds us that spatialization is actually a productive movement bringing to existence the impossible and indicating the fundamental changeability encoded in what seeks to be established. Through a number of intermediate elements, the idea of *espacement* returns to Democritus and his understanding of *rhythmos*, the word which is different from the concept of rhythm, but closer to the movement of the wave on the edge between the sea and the beach. Tourists or multi-ethnic locals who flow into the park, along with brutally understood politics, note the park every day, recording its "soul" not so much permanently, but rather preserving its very mobility – a force that also requires resistance.

When material Beings are denied the status of things functioning beyond the interaction with human cognitive capabilities, while ideas even by prominent contemporary mathematicians are granted the status of Beings, the role of reflection on all intermediate states between being and non-being and the ways of transition from non-being to being grows. The problem, which has already been identified in Plato, is that this gap between one and the other, such a split, tear-



<sup>11</sup> L. Burchill, *In-Between "Spacing" and the "Chôra" in Derrida: A Pre-Originary Medium?*, [in:] *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Arts, Politics*, ed. H. Oosterling, E. Plonowska Ziarek, Lanham 2011, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> J. Derrida, *Différance*, [in:] *idem*, *Margins of Philosophy*, transl. A. Bass, Brighton 1982, p. 8; see also *ibidem*, p. 13: "the becoming-space of time or becoming-time of space (*temporization*)".

<sup>13</sup> J. Derrida, *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, transl. A. Bass, [in:] *idem*, *Writing and Difference...*, Chicago 1978, p. 217, for: L. Burchill, *ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> J. Derrida, *Le Toucher*, Jean-Luc Nancy, Paris 2000, p. 207, for: L. Burchill, *op. cit.*.



<sup>15</sup> Kants handschriftlicher Nachlaß, vol. 5, *Reflexionen zur Metaphysics*, Berlin 1928, no. 6359 [1797]: "Überhaupt ist der Schematismus einer der schwierigsten Punkte. Selbst Hr. Beck kann sich nicht darein finden. Ich halte dies Capitel für eines der wichtigsten". "In general, the schematism is one of the most difficult points. Even Herr [J. S.] Beck cannot find his way therein. I hold this chapter [in CPR] to be one of the most important", p. 160; as cit. in: **M. Heidegger**, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, transl. J. S. Churchill, foreword Th. Langan, Bloomington 1965, p. 118.

ing or rupture, may be suspected to be more originary than being and non-being. The interval forces Being to appear, but at the same time it remains open to the transition states of being and non-being. Both in the literary imagination and in the urban reality, similar interruptions seems to be necessary, introducing space for something that can only happen in future. Parks such as Eden or the Parisian La Villette are openings to something that can take place, forcing one to consider whether the area produced by the separation appears simultaneously with time or whether time is secondary to the gesture of spatialization.

Burchill distinguishes the question of the appearance of space among aporia of Derrida's thoughts, because any beginning must take place. The assumption that the possibility of inscription no longer applies to a constituted space, but produces spatiality of that space does not remove the suspicion that this spatiality must have existed earlier, even if it was only a potential existence, another existence, or non-existence. In Burchill's opinion, the productivity of spacing depends thus on the exteriority or a certain pre-originary space, even if Derrida does not develop the thought of such dependence more deeply. This pre-space, which is prior to all originarity, is neither existing nor ideal, but belongs to the property of another possibility, it is the *triton genos* (or *tertium quid*), which leaves it independent of rationalization, as a way of understanding rather what is present.

Derrida referred the ambiguity of spacing to the *chôra* or another equally famous philosophical "in-between", which was Kant's schematism. In both cases it was a matter of explaining the space between the world of phenomena and Being. When Kant is mentioned, it should be taken into account that pre-space should be considered in conjunction with the issue of anteriority to time, a problem which can be described as prototemporalism. Kant's assumption (in edition B of *Critique of Pure Reason*) that the common root of two trunks of human cognition (i.e. sensuality and intellect) is unknown, although earlier (in edition A) he decided that it is made by transcendental imagination, did not remove the problem, but only postpones it. Although it may seem for a while that the originary intuition was accurate, there is much more cognitive benefit in the situation that what was initially accepted by Kant as recognized, he re-described then as unknown. Such a spacing of possibilities brings together several applied concepts and allows to make new remarks about space. However, before presenting an actualized account of spatiality, one should put in order the achievements of Kant, Heidegger and Derrida in relation to the issue of schematism, and in particular to the transcendental imagination.

Kant himself considered "The Schematism of Pure Concepts of the Understanding" or maybe the problems associated with it to be one of the most difficult parts of *Critique of Pure Reason*<sup>15</sup>. In the work of such a great rationalist like him, the following statement should be regarded as unexpected:

This schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their mere form is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty<sup>16</sup>.

The further part of Kant's quoted statement indicates that the reason for Kant's psychological rather than philosophical opinions about schematism was the nature of transcendental imagination, whose functioning turned out to be extremely difficult to grasp and, in Heidegger's opinion, even led Kant to the borders of the abyss<sup>17</sup>.

Heidegger's attempt to remove some of the uncertainties in this respect in his work *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929) did not provide adequate explanations. The suggestions made in this work show that the basic solutions to the decisive problems remained in the seed and provisional stage<sup>18</sup>. In the context of the deliberations on the character of the space of the Parc de La Villette made in this paper, it seems exceptionally inappropriate to continue to maintain the primacy of time over space, which was outlined in Kant's work and continued by Heidegger. To break this tradition requires a repetition of the path of Kant's reflections, so to do as Heidegger did earlier, but this time assuming a repetition of the latter's actions as well. The ambiguities existing in the works of both philosophers cause that even the most strict repetition imposes the necessity of making interpretations that go beyond what has been achieved so far. Heidegger might have expected attempts to transcend the existing ambiguities when, at the end of the chapter on transcendental imagination, he reminded that Kant's work was intended as an apology of Leibniz and his own interpretation is, in turn, an extraction of hidden passion from *Critique of Pure Reason*, which caused that many from what Kant did not say, appeared in his explanations.

The characteristics of schematism require a reminder that Kant initially, in the edition A of *Critique of Pure Reason*, accepted the existence of three sources of cognition, which Heidegger, not without serious justification, described as ontological.

There are three original sources (capacities or faculties of the soul) which contain the conditions of the possibility of all experience, and cannot themselves be derived from any other faculty of the mind, namely, *sense*, *imagination*, and *apperception*... All these *faculties* have a transcendental (as well as empirical) employment which concerns the form alone, and is possible *a priori*<sup>19</sup>.

We saw that there are three subjective sources of knowledge upon which rests the possibility of experience in general and of knowledge of its objects – *sense*, *imagination*, and *apperception*. Each of these can be viewed as empirical, namely, in its application to given appearances. But all of them



<sup>16</sup> I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (further as CPR), transl., ed. P. Guyer, A. W. Wood, Cambridge 1998, B 180–181, p. 273.

<sup>17</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Kant...*, p. 173: "Does not the *Critique of Pure Reason* deprive itself of its own theme if pure reason is transformed into transcendental imagination? Does not this laying of the foundation lead to an abyss? By his radical interrogation, Kant brought the »possibility« of metaphysics before this abyss. He saw the unknown; he had to draw back. Not only did the imagination fill him with alarm, but in the meantime [between the first and second editions] he had also come more and more under the influence of pure reason as such".

<sup>18</sup> M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 225

<sup>19</sup> CPR A 94, for: M. Heidegger, *Kant...*, p. 143.





<sup>20</sup> CPR A 115; as cit. in: **M. Heidegger**, *Kant...*, p. 143.

<sup>21</sup> **M. Heidegger**, *Kant...*, p. 143–144.

<sup>22</sup> CPR A 124; as cit. in: **M. Heidegger**, *Kant...*, p. 141.

<sup>23</sup> CPR B 180, p. 273.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

are likewise *a priori* elements or foundations, which make this empirical employment itself possible<sup>20</sup>.

Kant's statements on the sources of cognitive faculties oscillate in his work (in edition A) between statements on the functioning of three abilities and two trunks of cognition<sup>21</sup>. The sensuality and intellect are distinguished, and the position of imagination is established as intermediary and at the same time as if more originary than the other two. "A pure imagination, which conditions all *a priori* knowledge, is thus one of the fundamental faculties of the human soul"<sup>22</sup>. Assigning the imagination important functions, its double positioning (being between the two remaining faculties and at the same time preceding them) and subsequently depreciating it (in edition B), remind us of the fate of the concept of *chôra* in the history of philosophy. Kant gave the imagination the task of assigning data of pure intuition to the concepts of the intellect. Imagination synthesizes data and presents them as a kind of images (more precisely schemata), which bring them closer to the formulas of thinking. "This representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image is what I call the schema for this concept"<sup>23</sup>. At the same time, Kant clarifies: "In fact it is not images of objects but schemata that ground our pure sensible concepts"<sup>24</sup>. Along with the statements that the described actions are giving time order to phenomena, there was an indication of time as the basis of imagination and its superiority over space, although both time and space take place equally as pure intuition. From a logical point of view, the undervaluation of space cannot be now maintained.

Countless interpretations of the question of cognition analysed by Kant are impossible to put in order and prompt to focus on basic issues and formulate one's own opinions on that matter. While it is understandable that Kant distinguishes empirical phenomena of time and space and treats them as consequences of their transcendental interpretations, further divisions should be made in the area of those transcendental interpretations and it should be stated that time and space in their transcendental versions are the result of imagination, which, although granted a temporal character, was not granted a spatial component. Imagination could be called a movement, which activate the dead and motionless time into action (only then making it a form of pure intuition) and similarly brings space out of some more general spatiality. The time before the introduction of movement would be temporality, while the activation of this temporality would be the temporizing of time. The same would happen with spatialisation of space (more precisely of spatiality) omitted as a component of imagination. It would also be appropriate to link the two parts of imagination in their active forms and to state that the activation of time is its spatialisation, while the temporalisation of space is also its temporalisation through "shaking" (described in

other circumstances as characteristic of the *chôra*). Time would not only be taken out of itself, but also introduced into space. Spatialisation would be a condition for activating time. As a consequence, imagination could be described as an activity activating time and space. Imagination should not be reduced only to pure time, or even to pure space ignored by Kant and Heidegger, but it would be necessary to emphasize an activity that is performed.

Temporalisation and spatialisation performed in the area of pure intuition prompt to consider their even more transcendental forms. If it is reasonable to separate the empirical or colloquially understood phenomena of time and space from their pure, transcendental interpretations, then their further “purification” and the next stage of transcendentalisation should also be considered. Then one could focus on the supertranscendental imagination as the basis for the transcendental forms of time and space. In such understood super-imagination, both of its components would rest in it as motionless. This prompts to accept, completely outside of Kant and Heidegger, that there is yet another ignored factor, i.e. movement, which can also be described as dislocation, displacement or difference of forces. The newly defined imagination in this situation is dead time, “empty” space (atopy) and unmoved movement (motionlessness). As one can see at this stage of the deliberations, Kant’s hidden thoughts, which led Heidegger to transcend his achievements, *Critique of Pure Reason*, now force to transcend the achievements of both philosophers and adopt even more originary forms of time (as timelessness), space (as emptiness, abyss or nothingness) and movement (as motionlessness). Just as it was a case in the complements of Kant and Heidegger carried out here, for which, however, one can find indications in very them, also in this case, there are source premises for separating out the next level of transcendence. So when Heidegger (following Kant) develops the concept of time as a self-affection of the soul, it justifies the thesis that such self-affection is not only the most originary form of time, but also the originary form of space and movement. It seems that on the way of this *regressus ad infinitum* it is not possible to go backwards any further, however, this level of deliberations on raising consciousness can be still developed. It may be useful at this stage of the journey to nowhere to trace, after Heidegger, the temporal, spatial and movement expressions that appeared during his presentation of transcendental imagination. They indicate that without movement, i.e. changes within themselves, time and space cannot reveal themselves. Continuation of reflection on originary time and space required the introduction of another factor, whose discovered super-transcendentalism logically prompted to save it from the fate of becoming another source or basis, and thus being situated alongside the existing principles of metaphysics and as if outside the existing language. The need to formulate this new term (which has become *différance*) and to deprive it of the deficiencies contained in other





<sup>25</sup> M. Heidegger, *Kant....*, p. 194.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Hrsg. F.-W. von Hermann, Frankfurt am Main 1991, p. 189.

fundamental notions was initially rooted in the concepts contained in the commentary to Kant analysed here.

Time is, by nature, pure affection of itself. But more than this, it is that in general which forms something on the order of a line of orientation which going from the self is directed toward ... in such a way that the objective thus constituted springs forth and surges back along this line. As pure self-affection, time is not an active affection concerned with the concrete self; as pure, it forms the essence of all auto-solicitation. Therefore, if the power of being solicited as a self belongs to the essence of the finite subject, time as pure self-affection forms the essential structure of subjectivity<sup>25</sup>.

The above excerpt says that the self creates not only what it defines as the world, but also itself. Heidegger's formulations indicate that this creation of itself has a skeleton, which consists not only of time conditions emphasized by the author, but also spatial and movement conditions revealed in the expressions: "going from the self directed toward" (*von-sich-aus-hin-zu-auf*, from-out-itself-toward-there), "auto-solicitation" (*Sich selbst-angehen*), "solicited" (*angegangen*)<sup>26</sup>. A separate problem was the circulation of French philosophical thought around the ultra-originary or super-transcendental source of everything, because the existing foundations such as Being (*Seiende*) or being (*Sein*) not only had the characteristics of old theology, but were also ethically and politically connected with authoritarian and sometimes also totalitarian systems. On the one hand, the reflection on the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, which gained a dominant position in the 1960s, and on the other, poststructuralism, whose influence Derrida not only succumbed to, but also took part in, obliged to rethink the metaphysics of presence. Within this theme, debatability ("discursivity") of existence has been emphasized and the links of all Being (*Seiende*) and being (*Sein*) with language, consciousness and subjectivity have been strengthened, which in the course of time have themselves been treated as successive variants of the *ousia* – fundamental being (*Sein*). As a consequence of focusing the reflection on the issues of language and consciousness, the position of the word "is" could not escape attention. A polemic element was introduced into the word "is" and the problem of nothingness was developed as if in the complementation. Thus, when the metaphysics of presence moved towards the study of absence, it became a philosophy of conditions for thinking and studying possibilities on an equal footing with impossibility.

The negations of the principle of the beginning and the centre, the polemic with the notion of the border and the negation of meaning (in the sense of reference of the structure of the work to external content) contained in Tschumi's comments to the Parc de La Villette, contributed to the metaphysical perversion that took place at that time. The starting point (or point at all), like the principle of

the centre, lost their previous simplicity and immobility, stability or absoluteness contained in them were replaced by almost their opposites: movement, instability and uncertainty. However, they were only almost replaced. Since the sharpening of the oppositions has been considered a part of the existing metaphysics, one should talk about acts of distorting basic notions rather than replacing them with opposites. The “distorting” of metaphysics has become a new metaphysics, even as if a religion, in which an indeterminate beginning and a moving multiplied centre were made the foundations of faith. Above all, however, all notions have become more deeply rooted in the variable historicity, which has led to current political and even personal problems becoming a hidden source of reflection.

The links between a philosopher’s biography and their achievements are usually rejected with a high degree of categoricity, but Heidegger’s cult of originarity and the fact that Derrida does not share it have both their sources and consequences in the personal lives of each one of them. Such subjects were reluctantly discussed in philosophy due to the customary separation of history of philosophy from biographies of philosophers. However, the vague objective of deconstruction is a question of new community, power and domination, in which the importance of singularity and the will to weaken social cohesion is growing. At the same time, the praise of idiomaticity in the language is at the same time a defence of the position of the alien and the other in the re-evaluated political community – in a newly organized union of non-identical individuals. The rationale for considering Tschumi’s distance towards the beginning or the centre as ethically and politically motivated is also strengthened by his direct involvement in the social revolution. In the specific case of the Parisian park, the link between the sphere of thinking and revolt are the problems of space, which are closely related to the central thinking of Derrida. In carrying out the proof of this thesis, the changeability of concepts used by the philosopher may be a certain difficulty, however, in the analyses of the terms of his philosophy, almost always there were specifically understood issues of the development of spatiality.

The circulation of influences between philosophically understood metaphysics and all ordinary forms of existence, starting from the life of the individual, through religious or political problems, leads us to consider them as a certain collective intelligible whole and to equate it with the structure of the language. Such a juxtaposition led to the conclusion that everything is a variation of discourse or text. Reflection on language, especially de Saussure’s findings, allowed to notice that “in language there are only differences”. As the fragment of *Course in General Linguistics* quoted by Derrida says.

The conceptual side of value is made up solely of relations and differences with respect to the other terms of language, and the same can be said of





<sup>27</sup> F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Ch. Bally, A. Sechehaye, collab. A. Reidlinger transl. W. Baskin, New York 1959, pp. 117–118, 120; as cit. in: J. Derrida, *Différance...*, p. 10–11.

<sup>28</sup> J. Derrida, *Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*, [in:] *idem*, *Writing and Difference...*, p. 292.

<sup>29</sup> J. Derrida, *Différance...*, p. 17: "Force itself is never present; it is only a play of differences and quantities"; p. 18: "Thus, *différance* is the name we might give to the 'active', moving discord of different forces, and of differences of forces".

its material side. [...] Everything that has been said up to this point boils down to this: in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences **without positive terms**. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it<sup>27</sup>.

In de Saussure's and Derrida's opinion, both the metaphysically treated language and the whole existence ceased to be closed structures and became a field of play that constantly reveals new meanings. In such an assumed area of play of senses there are no established beginnings or centres, which does not mean that no attempts are made to establish them. A further question arises: what is the origin of the game in this situation? It confirms the irremovable tendency to search for the beginning and close the structure again. Although the game undermines the existence in its immobility, or in other words "is the disruption of presence"<sup>28</sup>, it seems inevitable to ask about the reason for the game, about its origin. The way to solve the problem was sketched out in earlier manifestations of the philosophy of difference, especially in Hegel, de Saussure and Heidegger.

The game is an opening up of possibilities that are made by the division of the conditions of possibilities, both the transcendental conditions, and especially the transcendental conditions – time and space. Thus, we are dealing with the emergence of the world as something seemingly external, as well as with the emergence of the world as a given inner consciousness, or with the appearance of consciousness itself as a basic illusion of presence. The divisions referred to here are the result of the action of differences, but these result from a particularly originary condition, which is *différance*. *Différance*, in order to be able to meet the condition of being a condition of conditions, had to be seriously different from all previous bases. Criticism of the origin of metaphysics has created the requirement that *différance* not only must avoid becoming another basis for thinking, but also that it must not be any form of existence known to date. *Différance* should not be. The answer to the question what "is" the *difference* and how it becomes the cause of time and space is not easy.

All existence requires the beginning, which indicates change and movement. However, when a question is asked about the effective cause of the movement, philosophical thought falls into the trap of the concept of the beginning, which can be similarly questioned about the source, origin or effective cause. When the problem of *regressus ad infinitum*, i.e. moving back to the next beginning of the beginning, is partially solved by indicating that the originary movement is the result of a difference in forces or quantity<sup>29</sup>, then atten-



tion will be paid to the difference itself, which after all has no substantial features and escapes from being another *arche*. However, it is not possible to go beyond metaphysics perfectly and definitively. An absolutised or purified difference, referred to as *différance*, retains certain features of the foundation of being or thinking. A difference from the previous supports of existence or thought is the fact that the decisive part of the terms attributed to it has a negative character: *différance* is neither active nor passive, it is neither present nor absent, it is neither real nor ideal, it is neither sensual nor intelligible. Despite the associations between *différance* and God, negative traits do not bring it closer to being in the meaning typical of negative theology.

And yet those aspects of *différance* which are thereby delineated are not theological, not even in the order of the most negative of negative theologies, which are always concerned with disengaging a superessentiality beyond the finite categories of essence and existence, that is, of presence, and always hastening to recall that God is refused the predicate of existence, only in order to acknowledge his superior, inconceivable, and ineffable mode of being<sup>30</sup>.

The pure difference, *différance*, although reaching back to Heidegger's ontological difference, is older than Being itself, "refer us beyond the history of Being, and also beyond our language, and everything that can be named in it"<sup>31</sup>. "Différance is neither a word nor a concept"<sup>32</sup>, so that it cannot have a single accurate name, but is suspended between some single, non-communicable word and a multitude of terms such as archi-writing, archi-trace, gram, spacing, supplement, pharmakon, hymen, margin-mark-march"<sup>33</sup>. It comes from nothingness and is "the abyss opening up in a place traditionally intended for the basis"<sup>34</sup>.

The richness of negative and positive terms is accompanied by a multitude of different functions, puzzling enough in relation to something that does not exist in any way. From the point of view of the deliberations on the Parisian park and Tschumi's concepts, it is first of all necessary to consider the relation of *différance* to space and its definition. So *différance* in the most basic understanding is spatialisation or spacing, introduction of activity into time and space. *Différance* reveals differences, which are disintegration, shaken movement, dispersion activating time and space with the possibility of perceiving them. This perception leads to yet another cosmogony, a philosophical-religious justification, a story in which logic takes revenge on its original absence, because the narrative, ordered by memory, recreates and reveals its illegitimate origin and the negative beginning of all basicity. The logic necessary for the establishment of the epic tries to murder oneself with Oedipal fatalism. When a point appears, as if an archaic observer or the beginning of a saga, its func-



<sup>30</sup> J. Derrida, *Différance...*, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3, 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> B. Banasiak, *Róż(ni(c)ość*, [w:] J. Derrida, *O gramatologii*, transl. B. Banasiak, Warszawa 1999, p. 12.



<sup>35</sup> B. Markowska, *Gramatologia jako projekt polityczny: dekonstrukcja i kwestia sprawiedliwości*, "Idea. Studia nad strukturą i rozwojem pojęć filozoficznych" vol. 20 (2008), p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Jenenser Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*, Hrsg. G. Lasson, Leipzig 1923; A. Koyré, *Hegel à Iéna. (A propos de publications récentes)*, "Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger" 1934, no. 9/10 (118); reprinted in: *idem, Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique*, Paris 1961, pp. 153–154.

<sup>37</sup> G. W. F. von Hegel, *op. cit.*, p. 202, as cit. in: J. Derrida, *Différance...*, pp. 13–14.

tioning is possible thanks to the impermanent present, which, in order to constitute itself, requires not only separation (distinguishing) from the past and the future, but also the loss of identity with itself, the demonstration of instability reaching non-existence.

The present can only happen in an unsuccessful way, as it is required to do so by the internal difference in itself. The unfulfilling identity of the present has analogies in all being gaining space for its development, in which being apparently develops more and more widely and multiplies its divisions, but is not able to lose its connection with non-being. The space of being tries to reach the daring substancealization, but its every manifestation is possible only thanks to its pure originarity saturated with internal contradictions. In both cases, the pure space and the objectified one, it must differ, separate and happen centrifugally, it must become something special, unlike anything from which it results.

There is something that has enabled the very manifestation of Being and being (presence and present) – some place (*chôra*) in which the movement of revealing occurs and which can not be called by us in the language that is only a derivative of its action<sup>35</sup>.

The issue that emerges here: "how a simple thing can be a matrix of differences?" is based on an earlier philosophy. Derrida points in this respect to excerpts from Hegel's *The Jena System*, youthful inédits of the Prussian philosopher, written from manuscripts, published by George Lasson, and then commented by Alexandre Koyré in the 1930's<sup>36</sup>. Hegel's instructive argument reads as follows:

The infinite, in this simplicity, is, as a moment opposed to the equal-to-itself, the negative, and in its moments, although it is (itself) presented to and in itself the totality, (it is) what excludes in general, the point or limit; but in its own (action of) negating, it is related Immediately to the other and negates itself by itself. The limit or moment of the present (*der Gegenwart*), the absolute 'this' of time, or the now, is of an absolutely negative simplicity, which absolutely excludes from itself all multiplicity, and, by virtue of this, is absolutely determined; it is not whole or a *quantum* which would be extended in itself (and) which, in itself, also would have an undetermined moment, a diversity which, as indifferent (*gleichgültig*) or exterior in itself, would be related to an other (*auf ein anderes bezöge*), but in this is a relation absolutely different from the simple (*sondern es ist absolut differente Beziehung*)<sup>37</sup>.

According to Hegel, the present not so much "is", but is rather a certain relation. The similarity of Derrida's theses is very clear, which was due to Koyré's comments.

Koyré most remarkably specifies in a note: "*different Relation: differente Beziehung. One might say: differentiating relation*". And on the next page,

another text of Hegel's in which one can read this: "*Diese Beziehung ist Gegenwart, als eine differente Beziehung* [This relationship is [the] present as a different relationship]. Another note of Koyré's: "The term different here is taken in an active sense"<sup>38</sup>.



<sup>38</sup> J. Derrida, *Différance...*, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

Derrida denied the *différance* to be active or passive, but (his?) thinking returning to the deep current of old metaphysics inevitably indicates the strength of the differential relation (identified with the present). When following the traditional separation of the beginning, one should also put forward the thesis that the present seems to be later than the *differente Beziehung*.

The drawback of thinking about *différance* are only terse analyses of the relations between time and space, and in them a definitely smaller role is given to space. Discussions on the present show the ways of acting of pure *différance* and in this connection the links of *différance* with the establishment of space.

An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is though on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject. In constituting itself, in dividing itself dynamically, this interval is what might be called *spacing*, the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space (*temporization*). And it is this constitution of the present, as an "originary" and irreducibly nonsimple (and therefore, *stricto sensu* nonoriginary) synthesis of marks, or traces of retentions and protentions (to reproduce analogically and provisionally a phenomenological and transcendental language that soon will reveal itself to be inadequate), that I propose to call *archi-writing*, *archi-trace*, or *différance*. Which (is) (simultaneously) *spacing* (and) *temporization*<sup>39</sup>.

The term "différance" and some of its synonyms in French contain both temporal and spatial moments. Space turns out to be even less graspable than time, and philosophy does not have any work dedicated to space that would match Husserl's *Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (*Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, 1928). From the fragment of Derrida's text about *différance* quoted above, it follows, however, that its inseparability from space is based on a "differential relation", which can be treated as a form of articulation, distinguishing distinctive and individualized parts and, consequently, leading to final singularity, breaking with communication and community based on identity. A community based on the difference and incompatibility is no longer a hidden value of Western culture. Spatiality understood as an infinite disintegration of space reveals a clear ethical and political value. The Parc de La Villette makes visible, but also



<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, *Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from "Being and Time"*, [in:] *idem*, *Margins of Philosophy*, transl. A. Bass, Brighton 1982, pp. 41–42.

<sup>41</sup> M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. J. Macquarrie, E. Robinson, New York 1962; as cit. in: J. Derrida, *Ousia ...*, p. 37.

elevates the infinite multiplication of divisions within the community and attributes positive moral values to this variety of spacing.

The continuation of reflections on the relations between time and space contained in the article *Différance* was given by the text *Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from "Being and Time"*<sup>40</sup>.

It presents a commentary on the footnote used in the penultimate paragraph of the last chapter of *Being and Time* entitled *Temporality and Within-time-ness as the Source of the Ordinary Conception of Time*. Heidegger sketches in it the history of the understanding of time and space from Aristotle's *Physics* IV, through Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, 1817) to Bergson's *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (*Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 1889). Among other things, he states:

Bergson's view is in accord with Hegel's thesis that space 'is' time, in spite of the very different reasons they have given. Bergson merely says the reverse that time (*temps* [in French in the text in order to oppose *temps*, time, to *durée*, duration]) is space. Bergson's view of time too has obviously arisen from an Interpretation of the Aristotelian essay on time<sup>41</sup>.

Derrida's analyses draw attention to a number of problems that occur on the way of the so-called colloquial understanding of time. First of all, in Hegel's thought paraphrasing Aristotle it is not understandable

how do space, how do nature, in their undifferentiated immediacy, receive difference, determination, quality? Differentiation, determination, qualification can only overtake pure space as the negation of this original purity and of this initial state of abstract indifferentiation which is properly the spatiality of space. Pure spatiality is determined by negating properly the indetermination that constitutes it, that is, by itself negating itself. By *itself* negating itself: this negation has to be a determined negation, a negation of space *by* space. The first spatial negation of space is the POINT. "The difference (*Unterschied*) of space is, however, essentially a determinate, qualitative difference. As such it is first the *negation* of space *itself*, because this is immediate, *differenceless* (*unterschiedlose*) self-externality: the point" (*Enc.*, sec. 256, p. 31). The point is the space that does not take up space, the place that does not take place; it suppresses and replaces the place, it takes the place of the space that it negates and conserves. It spatially negates space. It is the first determination of space. As the first determination and first negation of space, the point spatializes or *spaces* itself. It negates itself by itself in its relation to itself, that is, to another point. The negation of negation, the spatial negation of the point is the LINE. The point negates and retains itself, extends and sustains itself, lifts itself (by *Aufhebung*) into the line, which thus constitutes the *truth* of the point. But secondarily this negation is a negation of *space*, that is, to the extent that it retains itself by suppressing itself (*als sich aufhebend*) the points is the *line*,

the first Being-other, that is, the Being-spatial of the point (ibid.). According to the same process, by *Aufhebung* and negation of negation, the truth of the line is the PLANE<sup>42</sup>.

Derrida's comment exposed a clear contradiction that occurs in the thesis that the space that should be called ordinary, empirical or sensual emerges as a negation of pure space characterized by a lack of differentiation. According to Hegel, "space itself [...] is immediate differenceless (*unterschiedlose*) self-externality"<sup>43</sup>. The introduction of a definition, limit or measure is a negation of undifferentiation and the revealing of time. As Derrida explained: "Space, therefore, has become concrete in having retained the negative within itself"<sup>44</sup>. And as he further stated:

It has become space in losing itself, in determining itself, in negating its original purity, the absolute indifferenciation and exteriority that constituted itself in its spatiality. Spatialization, the accomplishment of the essence of spatiality, is a despatialization and vice versa<sup>45</sup>.

To the extent that it is, that is, to the extent that it becomes and is produced, that it manifests itself in its essence, that it **spaces** itself, in itself relating to itself, that is, in negating itself, space is time. It temporalizes itself, it relates itself to itself and mediates itself as time. Time is *spacing*. It is the relation of space to itself, its for-itself. [...] Time *relève* [relifts] space<sup>46</sup>.

Bernard Tschumi, by making the "point-line-plane" sequence the basis of the Parc de La Villette project, both in his texts and in realised work, reinforced the conclusions stemming from Derrida's deductions. The three layers of the park, referring to the sequence mentioned above, made clearly incompatible, created a spatial and artistic apology of incompatibility, thus also of polemicity or problematization. It is not possible to go beyond the thought of the space that was described by Heidegger, questioned by Derrida and which reaches back to Aristotle. However, it is possible to loosen its restraining form and partially change strong dialectics into weaker polemics. Instead of the decisive opposition or Hegel's system of contradictions and negations, diversity is introduced as an element analogous to the former metaphysical basis, origin or cause. In the space applied by Tschumi, nothing of its old terms is lost (which emphasizes the multiplicity of space) and thus, in the ethical and political sphere, the coexistence of non-coherent components becomes possible and visible. The logical layer of the problem of space, which has so far been based on the assumption of deriving complexity from simplicity, is also improved. Instead of a logically incorrect thesis that simplicity can be the source of multiplicity, another thesis was put forward, assuming that multiplicity is already in the very basis and reasonableness is an overused tool for limiting the state of free organization. Diversity replaces absolute simplicity and lack of difference, because



<sup>42</sup> J. Derrida, *Ousia...*, pp. 41–42.

<sup>43</sup> G. W. F. von Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, Zweiter Teil: *Die Naturphilosophie* 1. *Die Mechanik, a. der Raum*, [in:], *idem*, *Werke*, vol. 9, § 256, Frankfurt am Main 1979, p. 43: *des Raums selbst, weil dieser das unmittelbare unterschiedslose Außersichsein ist*"; J. Derrida, *Ousia...*, p. 41.

<sup>44</sup> J. Derrida, *Ousia...*, p. 42.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 42–43.





<sup>47</sup> M. Kostyszak, *Istota techniki – głos Martina Heideggera*, Wrocław 1998, p. 109.

<sup>48</sup> L. Burchill, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> J. Bollock, *Deux figures principales de l'atomisme d'après Aristote: l'entrecroisement des atomes et la sphère du feu*, [in:] *Naturphilosophie bei Aristoteles und Theophrast. Verhandlungen des 4. Symposium Aristotelicum veranstaltet in Göteborg, August 1966*, Hrsg. I. Düring, Heidelberg 1969; as cit. in: L. Burchill, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>50</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, book A, part 4, 985b, transl. W. D. Ross, Oxford 1924, p. 503; see also Arystoteles, *Metafizyka*, book I, 985b 5–15, ed. M. A. Krapiec, A. Maryniarczyk, transl. T. Żeleźnik, foreword M. A. Krapiec, ed. scient. A. Maryniarczyk, Lublin 1996, pp. 32–34: “*Λεύκι ππος δὲ καὶ ὁ ἐταῖρος [5] αὐτοῦ Δημόκριτος στοιχεῖα μὲν τὸ πλήρες καὶ τὸ κενὸν εἰναίφασιν, λέγοντες τὸ μὲν ὄν τὸ δὲ μὴ ὄν, τούτων δὲ τὸ μὲν πλήρες καὶ στερεὸν τὸ ὄν, τὸ δὲ κενὸν τὸ μὴ ὄν (διὸ καλοῦνθὲν μᾶλλον τὸ ὄν τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἶναι φασιν, ὅτι οὐδὲ τοῦ κενοῦ τὸ σῶμα), αἷτια δὲ τῶν ὄντων ταῦτα ὡς [10] ὕλην καὶ καθάπερ οἱ ἐν ποιοῦντες τὴν ὑποκειμένην οὐσίαν τᾶλλα τοῖς πάθεσιν αὐτῆς γεννῶσι, τὸ μανὸν καὶ τὸ πυκνὸν ἀρχὰς τίθενται τῶν παθημάτων, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ οὗτοι τὰς διαφορὰς αἰτίας τῶν ἄλλων εἰναίφασιν. ταῦτα μὲν τρεῖς εἶναι λέγουσι, σχῆμά τε καὶ τάξιν καὶ [15] θέσιν: διαφέρειν γάρ φασιν τὸ ὄν ῥυθμῶ καὶ διαθιγῇ καὶ τροπῇ μόνον: τούτων δὲ ὁ μὲν ῥυθμὸς σχημά ἐστιν ἢ δὲ διαθιγὴ τάξις ἢ δὲ τροπὴ θέσις”.*

the very existence, also the existence of simplicity, is differentiation. The park, the *chôra* or space in such an approach show themselves as a nothingness saturated with contradictions, an entanglement of difference, chaos or a dwelling of *différance*.

### Truth has a musical nature<sup>47</sup>, so does architecture

What makes it possible for a work of art to participate fully in the above described disorders of old metaphysics, to have a share in a philosophy that is not only written but also happens? Up until now, it could be said that the happening of philosophy in space means making its divisions into different and incompatible parts visible, for example, as it is presented by the Parc de La Villette. The final fragments of Louise Burchill's article introduce yet another possibilities of describing the origin of any space. The author reminds us that spacing (*espacement*) is connected with the proto-temporalising movement, which according to Democritus was connected not with atoms, “the something” (*éon*) but with a vacuum “the nonsomething” (*me éon*)<sup>48</sup>. The atoms, as Burchill goes on to explain, do not have a movement of their own, but differentiate themselves in relation to the vacuum, which is called *rhuthmoi*. Burchill quoted a Greek source, for Jean Bollock, stating that “[the atoms] glide in the void, which, by not offering any resistance, is equivalent to a proper movement”<sup>49</sup>. It should be added here that, among the most ancient Greek applications of the word *chôra*, there were those that assumed its connection with the act of giving or giving up a place. The existing philosophy does not have a tradition of contemplation on withdrawal, but perhaps avoidance or evasion is a symptom of the functioning of nothingness?

Searching in Greek philosophy for the relationship between **originally** structured movement (*rhuthmos/rhythmos*) and space/place as a certain form of non-existence (*chôra*), it is worth to refer to the content of the discussion on the philosophy of Democritus contained in Book Alpha Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

Leucippus and his associate Democritus say that the full and the empty are the elements, calling the one being and the other non-being – the full and solid being being, the empty non-being (whence they say being no more is than non-being, because the solid no more is than the empty); and they make these the material causes of things. And as those who make the underlying substance one generate all other things by its modifications, supposing the rare and the dense to be the sources of the modifications, in the same way these philosophers say the differences in the elements are the causes of all other qualities. These differences, they say, are three-shape and order and position. For they say the real is differentiated only by “rhythm” and “inter-contact” and “turning”; and of these rhythm is shape, inter-contact is order, and turning is position<sup>50</sup>.

The quoted fragment “gives space” to interpret that what some philosophers call things can also be described as an effect of difference or tension between fullness and vacuum. When assuming such a thesis, one should consider that the two elements belong to each other, are necessary for each other’s existence and come from the difference itself. Their union of belonging could even lead to the idea that they are the same, which seems unacceptable, but leads to the hypothesis that at least they are given the opportunity to pass from one to the other. Consequently, everything that exists can be a derivative of that difference. At the same time, differences of difference are nothing more than some kind of rhythms or sounds.

Rhythms, as well as their perception and concepts, organize and influence all forms of human activity<sup>51</sup>. In the history of the notion of rhythm, there have also been changes characteristic for many other notions, from their initial state, which could be an observation concerning nature, sexuality or agricultural activities, to more intellectual or colloquial approaches, concealing the incomprehensibility of the deeper content of a given notion. As Benveniste noted, the dictionaries explaining the words of ancient Greek without exception indicate that “ῥυθμός” is derived from the word “flow” and referred to the observation of the regular movement of sea waves<sup>52</sup>. Benveniste also showed that already in the fifth century BC the use of the term “ῥυθμός” to describe the movement of the sea was abandoned. Instead, this word was combined with the notion of form, which is only justified by the fact that the form is always taken by a matter of originary indeterminacy characterised as if by the fluidity of water. Considerations on the notion of rhythm are burdened with unresolved problems of the origin, character and comprehensibility of the content of this word, as well as the phenomenon it describes. The question then arises: do the visible rhythms belong to a more general world order (cosmos, *logos*), or are they purely human in nature, not necessarily parallel to the universal one. From this one, another question arises: are rhythms in human activities reproduced as of transcendental origin or are they produced according to non-transcendental measures? For there is a probability of lack of external reasons for rhythms and rather of designing the vision of externality according to reasons that are purely human and historical.

The starting point for this fragment of the reflection on the Parc de La Villette was the question: on what basis does the analysed work participate in the happening of philosophy? An attempt to answer the question led, through Burchill’s comments on motion and its connection with the spacing (*spatialization*), to the concept of *rhythm*. This makes it possible to assume the thesis that the development of space, which is the Park, would be based on a kind of sound that juxtaposed – in accordance with the architect’s assumptions – non-coherent elements. The created “sound”, a specific speech of the park,



<sup>51</sup> E. Benveniste, *La Notion de “rythme” dans son expression linguistique*, “Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique” 1951, no. 44, p. 401; *idem*, *The Notion of Rhythm in Its Linguistic Expression*, [in:] *Problems in General Linguistics*, transl. M. E. Meek, Coral Gables 1971, p. 281.

<sup>52</sup> É. Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque, étudiée dans ses rapports avec les autres langues indo-européennes*, Heidelberg-Paris 1916, s. 845: “mouvement réglé et mesuré, cadence, rythme: ῥεω ‘couler’ [...], le sens du mot ayant été emprunté au mouvement régulier des flots de mer”. See also E. Wolf, *Zur Etymologie von ῥυθμός und seiner Bedeutung in der älteren griechischen Literatur*, “Wiener Studien” no. 68 (1955), s. 106; W. Seidel, *Rhythmus*, [in:] *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, ed. K. Barck [et al.], Stuttgart-Weimar 2010, t. 5: *Post-moderne – Synästhesie*, p. 292 [Etymologie].





<sup>53</sup> W. Wrotkowski, *Jeden wieloimien-ny. Bóg Heraklita z Efezu*, Nowa Wieś – Warszawa 2008.

<sup>54</sup> K. Mrówka, *Heraklit. Fragmenty, przekład i komentarz*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 344–346.

<sup>55</sup> H. Diels, W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Zürich 1989, (further as: DK), B 80 Origenes, *C. Cels.*, VI, 42; as cit. in: J. Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy, Chapter 3 (Heracleitos of Ephesos)*, 3rd ed., London 1920, p. 102.

<sup>56</sup> DK, B 8, Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.*, VIII, 1, 1155 b 4; as in: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. H. Rackham, London 1934.

<sup>57</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, transl., introd. M. Cowan, Washington, D.C. 1998, p. 55.

can be considered a kind of ideological message, but also equated with a melody. The park affects the recipient with a special variety of the harmony of non-convergent components. However, if the park's operation is effective by mastering the contradiction, a question arises about the nature of the order introduced there. For the suspicion arises that with all the commitment to the spirit of disintegration – in Tschumi's language, “disfunction”, “dissociation” etc. – an order of uniting and unexpected power manifested itself in the park. It is possible to explain the situation using a new analogy and the latest interpretations of the philosophy of Heraclitus. In this context, attention should be paid in particular to the study by Wojciech Wrotkowski, which highlights the theological aspects of the preserved sentences of the philosopher from Ephesus<sup>53</sup>. Wrotkowski's analyses, but also those of Kazimierz Mrówka, combine the threads of Heraclitan gnomes into a consistent system in which opposing values are harmonized as the basic property of the *logos* – on the ontical, cosmic and discursive level<sup>54</sup>.

In the Heraclitus system, all existence is the consequence of a conflict, in other words: the conflict of contradictions that are necessary for being of things. “All things come into being and pass away (?) through strife”, as Origen summarized this view of Heraclitus<sup>55</sup>. In a similar manner Aristotle noted the origin of things according to Heraclitus writing that “Tis strife (*erin*) that makes the world go on” (B 8)<sup>56</sup>. The apt approach to this position is also contained in Nietzsche's comment stating:

The things in whose definiteness and endurance narrow human minds, like animal minds, believe have no real existence. They are but the flash and spark of drawn swords, the quick radiance of victory in the struggle of the opposites<sup>57</sup>.

Tschumi, never mentioning Heraclitus, refers nevertheless directly to these views. However, Tschumi's persistence in emphasizing in his work the value of any dissociation or dissonance is based on perceiving in the structure of reality the importance of another kind of necessity, which is – apart from striving for the extraction of incompatibilities – harmonizing them at the same time. The art of architecture in this configuration is a protest against the weakening of tensions, but at the same time it is also a slowly fossilizing, from which only art can recover. Logically, it cannot be denied that harmonisation is directed towards a lack of difference, which cannot be effective neither in reality nor in the *logos* itself. Harmonisation is an astonishing coercion leading to the introduction of contradictions into the state of order. Harmonising by ordering differences tries to destroy them, but does so ineffectively, as the difference returns, revealing a more primordial disorder. According to some aspects of Derrida's philosophy, the difference is the most irremovable.

The question also arises here: is the difference apolitical in relation to the park? Surprisingly, it seems that it was a purely personal situation of Derrida and Tschumi that was the source of the philosophy discussed here. Both were emigrants trying to settle in a hostile environment. Of course, the level of reluctance towards each of them can be graded, or the reluctance of the environment towards them can be ignored at all, but the introduction of nuances is only a blurring of the obvious: they were both strangers. It is therefore justified to refer to the Parc de La Villette also as a record of painful but denied experiences. In this context, Tschumi's park would be a place of the settlement of strangeness in which, through the temporary location of a guest on the existential level, the uncertainty of the fate of the native and the foreigner was equated. They both turn out to be "a Nothing in comparison with the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything"<sup>58</sup>. The park is a diminished State and a globe to which one is seemingly invited, but to a similar extent unwelcome. Doesn't that mean, however, that any delusion, and in this particular case the illusion of a tolerant society, is the only value worth insisting on?

The *logos*, manifesting itself in its confusing form, proves its uncanniness and monstrosity from the human point of view. It shows its inner tension by exposing its diversity, which means that it is audible or visible primarily in articulations containing antinomy. It becomes the speech of the universe, of which human speech is a part. Such a speech bases its value on truth, because it is in truth where the dignity of the *logos* presents itself in particular. However, it is necessary for the *logos* in question that this speech be false at the same time. The speech which is true is therefore only a convincing, cunning and insidious speech, which constantly accompanies the Greek gods or Homeric heroes, and later its character manifests itself in the philosophy of sophists or Gorgias. It can only express itself productively with the participation of beauty, which Heraclitus combined with the concept of "palintropos harmonie" ("παλίντροπος ἁρμονίη"). "The fairest harmony" (B 8)<sup>59</sup> is "the inverse harmony of a bow and lyre" (B 51)<sup>60</sup>. Each point of a string is tensioned in two opposite directions. This kind of order conceals its proper nature, it does not allow to reach it easily. Hence Heraclitus states: "Harmony invisible is better than visible" (B 54)<sup>61</sup>. So it is not a coincidence that "the most beautifully adorned things are like rubbish piled up random" (B 124)<sup>62</sup>. When a park architect bases their design on organised disorder, in an appropriate situation the effect is identical to when the planning is based on visible regularity. However, their work requires more careful listening to the hidden *logos*. It is not to be expected that there will be a common understanding in this regard. "Of the *logos* which is as I describe it men always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it" (B 1)<sup>63</sup>.



<sup>58</sup> B. Pascal, *Pensées* [Thoughts], sect. II, no. 72, transl. W. F. Trotter, New York 1909, p. 58.

<sup>59</sup> DK B 8, Aristoteles, *Eth. Nic.*, VIII, 1, 1155 b 4 (for: H. Rackham, *op. cit.*).

<sup>60</sup> DK B 51, Hippolytus, *Refut.*, IX, 9, 2, transl. J. H. MacMahon, [in:] P. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian*, ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, rev., chronologically arranged, pref., notes A. Cleveland Cox, Buffalo 1886, p. 126.

<sup>61</sup> DK B 54, Hippolytus, *Refut.*, IX, 5, 2; as cit. in: Ch. Wordsworth, *St. Hippolytus and the Church of Rome, in the Earlier Part of the Third Century: From the newly-discovered "Philosophumena"*, London 1853, p. 235.

<sup>62</sup> See W. J. Korab-Karpowicz, *The Presocratics in the Thought of Martin Heidegger*, New York 2017, p. 141; DK 22 B 124, Theophrastus, *Metaphys.*, 15: "ὁ κόσμος ὅσπερ σάρμα εἰκὴ κεχυμένον ὁ κάλλιστος κόσμος". See also M. Heidegger, *Heraclitus: The Inception of Occidental Thinking; Logic: Heraclitus's Doctrine of the Logos*, transl. J. Goesser Assaiane, S. Montgomery Ewegen, London 2018, p. 125.

<sup>63</sup> DK B 1, Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.*, VII, 132; as cit. in: Heraclitus, *The Cosmic Fragments*, ed., introd., comment. G. S. Kirk, Cambridge 1962, p. 33. See also: E. O'Connell, *Heraclitus and Derrida: Presocratic Deconstruction*, New York 2006, p. 24, 76, 172, 182.







<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, *The Stream*, [in:] *idem*, *Roman Triptych: Meditations*, trans. J. J. Peterkiewicz, Washington D.C. 2003.

<sup>65</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 47b-c, [in:] *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, trans. W. R. M. Lamb, London 1925: "God devised and bestowed upon us vision to the end that we might behold the revolutions of Reason in the Heaven and use them for the revolvings of the reasoning that is within us".

<sup>66</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 48a, [in:] *Plato...*

<sup>67</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, 48a, [in:] *Plato...*: "Wherefore if one is to declare how it actually came into being on this wise, he must include also the form of the Errant Cause, in the way that it really acts (*to tēs planōmenēs eidos aitias*)".

<sup>68</sup> A. Hernas, *Husserlowska wizja czasu bez przyszłości*, [in:] *Czas, przemijanie, wieczność*, ed. A. Bobko, M. Kozak, Kraków 2008, p. 53. Hernas refers to a part of Husserl's deductions, see: E. Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, "Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung" 1928, no. 9, p. 375, 438.

The *logos* may reveal itself more easily to the listener, but it also expresses itself in a kind of hollow echo or fading sound that is disturbing, hard to hear, as if there was also a powerful, influential silence in what the listener could perceive. "The Eternal Word. / How amazing is Your silence / in everything, in all that on every side / unveils the world of creation about us..."<sup>64</sup>. The poet's words indicate that the world's speech contains sounds of silence, emptiness or nothingness saturated with energy. The force immersed in nothingness seems to be much greater than that which has passed into sensual perception. Tschumi's park is a lyre and sound of such deepening, reversing palintropical sound of the *logos*. If commentators have recognized Heraclitus' ability to hear the eternally resounding speech of the universe, one should include in such a statement the ability to hear the inaudible chords of the *logos*.

Plato, when considering the issue of palintropic harmony, pointed mainly to sight as a tool for learning about the periodic movements of reason (also referred to as divine movements), almost immediately adding that voice and hearing were also given by gods to discover the fundamental balance<sup>65</sup>. The rediscovered rhythm is to save souls from the disorder into which cyclical movements fall in them. Cases of intemperance and lack of gracefulness result from the fact that the world "was generated as a compound, from the combination of Necessity and Reason" (*Timaeus*)<sup>66</sup>. Plato's considerations show that necessity (*ἀνάγκη*) is surprisingly unintentional, as if blind and deaf but nevertheless it is precisely this necessity that is the moving force<sup>67</sup>.

In a rich collection of first causes, *ἀνάγκη* is now considered to be the most originary. Musicality of this cosmic violence was the subject of many philosophical considerations, from Pythagoreans to Husserl, who referred to its regularities imposed by reason to explain the functioning of time. The problem is that necessity (with its irremovable error) must be connected with reason, which indicates that movement and lack of movement are connected with each other in the undiscovered depth. A situation of this kind led to the paradoxes of movement by Zeno of Elea, as well as difficulties in defining the time, especially in describing the present. In every more insightful description, the present turns out to be "dynamic, internally transforming and temporally extended"<sup>68</sup>, contradicting the equally strong intuition that it is the cessation of time, its point stagnation. Platonic descriptions of the components of the world and the consequences of the philosopher's thesis for subsequent reflections on them lead to think that any balance in them, however transient it may be, is desirable with the same necessity that makes it impossible. In the most visible way, the tendency to introduce rhythmic order was manifested in architecture, but attempts to formulate an understandable characteristic of order always combined it with a non-dimensional, erotic and mystical element. Matila Ghyka quotes a fragment of Paul Valéry's *Eupalinos* in this regard:



There where the passer-by sees but an elegant chapel – ‘t is but a trifle: four columns, a very simple style – there I have enshrined the memory of a bright day in my life. O sweet metamorphosis! This delicate temple, none knows it, is the mathematical image of a girl of Corinth, whom I hapily loved. It reproduces faithfully the proportions that were peculiarly hers. It lives for me. It gives me back what I have given it...<sup>69</sup>

The mysteries of Eros “the greater and more hidden” (210A1)<sup>70</sup>, are difficult to penetrate, but inevitably lead to divinity, which, in the light of the arguments conducted here, is above all the “place” of conflict. For this reason, any exacerbation of the contradictions manifested in Tschumi’s works must remain unsuccessful. The adoption of such a thesis does not rule out the possibility that any attempt to harmonise contradictions, as conservative architects have usually sought, will remain equally imperfect. Inevitably and necessarily “rubbish piled up random” must remain, in its secret principle, a part of the only *logos*. The recurring harmony entitles to recurring analogies, which leads to considering the park as a form of cult of values and features having their source in Being located outside its own borders<sup>71</sup>. Contemporary philosophy, just like all its tradition, describes this Being by new names, which must have their share in the complex interpretation of the Parisian park.

#### Słowa kluczowe

projekt Parku de La Villette, architektura i teoria Bernarda Tschumiego, koncepcja chôry, wyobrażenia transcendentale, filozofia Jacquesa Derridy, różnica (*différance*)

#### Keywords

project of the Parc de La Villette, architecture and theory of Bernard Tschumi, concept of *chôra*, transcendental imagination, philosophy of Jacques Derrida, *différance*

#### References

1. **Burchill Louise**, *In-Between “Spacing” and the “Chôra” in Derrida: A Pre-Originary Medium?*, [in:] *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Arts, Politics*, ed. H. Oosterling, E. Plonowska Ziarek, Lanham 2011.
2. **Derrida Jacques**, *Différance*, [in:] *idem*, *Margins of Philosophy*, transl. A. Bass, Brighton 1982.
3. **Derrida Jacques**, *Ousia and Grammê: Note on a Note from “Being and Time”*, [in:] *idem*, *Margins of Philosophy*, transl. A. Bass, Brighton 1982.
4. **Heidegger Martin**, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, transl. J. S. Churchill, Bloomington 1965.
5. **Kant Immanuel**, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl., ed. P. Guyer, A. W. Wood, Cambridge 1998.
6. **Tschumi Bernard**, *Questions of Space: The Pyramid and the Labyrinth (or Architectural Paradox)*, “Studio International” 1975, nr 190.



<sup>69</sup> **M. C. Ghyka**, *Le nombre d’or. Rites et rythmes pythagoriciens dans le développement de la civilisation occidentale*, Paris 1931, s. 56. **P. Valéry**, *Eupalinos, or The Architect*, [in:] *idem*, *Dialogues*, transl. W. McCausland Steward, pref. W. Stevens, Princeton 1989, p. 82; *idem*, *Eupalinos ou l’Architecte*, [w:] *idem*, *Oeuvres*, t. II, Paris 1960, s. 104: “Où le passant ne voit qu’une élégante chapelle, c’est peu de chose: quatre colonnes, un style très simple, j’ai mis le souvenir d’un clair jour de ma vie. O douce métamorphose ! Ce temple délicat, nul ne le sait, est l’image mathématique d’une fille de Corinthe, que j’ai heureusement aimée. Il en reproduit fidèlement les proportions particulières. Il vit pour moi! Il me rend ce que je lui ai donné...”.

<sup>70</sup> **Plato**, *Symposium*, [in:] *Dialogues of Plato*, transl. B. Jowett, 2nd ed., Oxford 1875, vol. 2, p. 61.

<sup>71</sup> **M. C. Ghyka**, *op. cit.*, p. 40.



**Dr. habil. Cezary Was, wascezar@gmail.com**

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław. Curator of the Museum of Architecture. Author of the books: *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej* (Antinomies of the Contemporary Sacred Architecture, 2008), *Architektura a dekonstrukcja. Przypadek Petera Eisenmana i Bernarda Tschumiego* (Architecture and Deconstruction. The case of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi, 2015) and dozens of articles on phenomena of the ancient and modern culture.

### Summary

**CEZARY WAS (University of Wrocław) / The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher**  
**The Parc de La Villette in Paris in the context of philosophy of chôra.**  
**Part III**

Tschumi believes that the quality of architecture depends on the theoretical factor it contains. Such a view led to the creation of architecture that would achieve visibility and comprehensibility only after its interpretation. On his way to creating such an architecture he took on a purely philosophical reflection on the basic building block of architecture, which is space. In 1975, he wrote an essay entitled *Questions of Space*, in which he included several dozen questions about the nature of space. The questions he formulated could be regarded as analogous to the situation in the philosophy of the time, in which the interest in questioning the most obvious forms of understanding the world and intellectual categories increased. The research on space is an area common to many fields of natural sciences, humanities and artistic creation, but it also deals with other problems, such as issues of experience. The concept of space-time continuum proposed by Hermann Minkowski drew attention to the identity of time and space with the events taking place. Probably regardless of the postulates of physicists commenting on Einstein's discoveries, also in philosophy it increased the importance of the concept of the event which became dominant in Heidegger's latest work *Contributions of Philosophy. Of the event*.

Furthermore, Tschumi's reflections on space entered into relation with the problem of experience, which aroused the interest of a group of French philosophers trying to assimilate Georges Bataille's concept of "inner experience". Both Tschumi and Derrida referred to Bataille because his views could be used not only to modify the concept of the subject, but also to change the understanding of what constitutes the area of architecture. The discussion on experience has led to the recognition that the subject is not sovereign, but actually a form of what is on their outside. Such insights make it possible to treat the area of the Parc de La Villette as existing mainly when it is organised by its users. The decisive features of the Park are its assumptions, according to which it is a variety of active void that leads to agreeing new social relations with it. The park does not force to participate in already existing moral or political communities, but tries to move into an unknown future in which the scope of free functioning of individuals will be increased. Doubts about the principles of functioning of the individual self and its discovery as a whole composed of non-coherent parts, as well as its dependence on its own depth full of disordered forces, influenced the understanding of architecture as a set of contradictions whose source is a fundamental void anticipating the empty phenomenal space. The use of this phenomenal void in architecture, as well as the rejection of the whole and unity, had a specific political purpose and drew its inspiration from political analyses. In the Parc de La Villette, metaphysics and politics were brought closer together because the philosophy of void was

used to create new conditions for community action. It can be argued that the source of this philosophy was the perception of errors in existing societies dependent on the shortcomings of traditional metaphysics.

Spacing (*espacement*) was one of the key terms in Derrida's philosophy, which was also combined with the concepts of *différance* and *chôra*. The study of the nature of space, especially its transition from the level of pure possibility to the level of sensual phenomenon, also contributes to understanding how well designed space can have an impact on its audience. This explanation is based on Tschumi's assumption that the space of the Parc de La Villette contradicts the integrating approaches and instead exposes contradictions, but it does so in a way that combines incompatible properties into a single piece of architecture. The specificity of such integration is similar to the invention of a musical phrase, which is an ideological message: moral and political. Such a thesis may raise doubts, however, if both the clearly adopted assumptions and those deduced from the work allow for their logically ordered presentation then to a limited extent it may be assumed that the work has achieved a connection between a specific philosophy of space and its practical application.

Derrida combined the problem of spatiality with the problem of transcendental imagination in Kant's philosophy, who in the first version of *Critique of Pure Reason* assumed that pure imagination precedes the appearance of time and space, even in their transcendental forms. The imagination in such a situation can be described as a factor activating time and space, which indicates what function is played by movement in this activity. This leads us to recognize that the ultra originary source of pure forms of sensual intuition is movement, which in early Greek philosophy was identified with void and its lack of resistance to phenomena occurring in it. Derrida's philosophy in search of a certain super-transcendental source of time and space pointed to *différance* which, like void or the *chôra*, does not have material features or even any other form of being. *Différance* is the primary cause of the disruption of motionlessness and the introduction of activity into motionless time and space, thus its activity can be described as spacing (*espacement*). Derrida's discoveries in this respect are not entirely original, because Hegel already pointed out when examining the present that it is primarily a differential relation (*differente Beziehung*), which, being seemingly neutral, influences the present with supernatural force and makes it unidentifiable with itself. *Differente Beziehung* must similarly influence the originary space, negating its initial character by multiplying its divisions and expanding its boundaries. *Différance* acts by revealing contradictions wherever there is apparent undifferentiation. Tschumi, composing the Parc de La Villette as a variety of void and a set of incompatible layers, followed the rules of *différance* or the *chôra*: he made void visible together with its saturation with contradictions.

If space can be considered to be the result of the activity of difference, such activity has a certain regularity, which influences the behaviour of its observers. Differences or contradictions fall into a certain rhythm, which can be considered a manifestation of transcendent order. The problem is that what can be considered the source of such order, namely the *logos* or God, is partly disorder and error. According to descriptions contained in *Timaeus*, the world is a combination of forces that drive to order with forces of erroneous necessity that resounds in every order and forces it to return to disorder. Derrida denied the possibility of understanding *différance* as a theological value, even if it were a negative or apophatic theology, but no categorical denial could be perfect. The assumption that *différance* or the *chôra* are not endowed with any substance properties cannot deny their activity, and thus a certain force. Already since Democritus, philosophy has multiplied the names of such a force and the contradictory variety of its manifestations, never forgetting also the necessity for reason to withdraw from the possibility of giving its correct characteristics. Such a withdrawal may be interpreted as an expression of respect and, in certain situations, as a cult of the force that precedes reasonableness. The Parc de La Villette, which is an artistic divagation about the contradictions and forces behind them, can be considered as a place of their sublimation, and therefore as a variation of the temple of what differs from order and disorder.



# The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher

The Parc de La Villette in Paris

in the context of philosophy of *chôra*

Part IV: Other Church / Church of Otherness

Cezary Wąs

University of Wrocław

## 1. Platonic *chôra* as pure activity

The assumption that the Parc de La Villette repeats the characteristics of a particular kind of being brings our discussion here once again to the question of the *chôra* and its description by Plato. It should be recalled once again that after Plato described the structure of the soul of the world as consisting of an indivisible substance, a divisible substance and one that has an intermediate nature between divisible and indivisible (*triton genos*, *Timaeus*, 35a–b), he returned three more times to the characteristics of the mysterious component of the structure of the world defined as the *chôra*<sup>1</sup>. Every subsequent reference to her (the *chôra* in Greek is female) contains an indication of her relationship to the factor of force. In order to create the soul of the world, the Demiurge mixed together an indivisible substance with a divisible substance, using violence that was probably made possible by the nature of the third component. This first appearance of the *chôra* in Plato's work did not say much about her character, but such a limitation of expression indicates the incomprehensibility of the *chôra*. Already at this stage of Plato's lecture, the *chôra* shows features that contradict her belonging to being. The *chôra* is ineffable. Since the very beginning, the *chôra* "is not".



<sup>1</sup> See B. Ogródnik, *O współczesnych rozwinięciach platońskiej kategorii chôra*, "Studia Whiteheadiana" 2006, no. 2, pp. 100–101.





— Marduk fighting Tiamat, *A Second Series of the Monuments Nineveh. Including bas-reliefs from the Palace of Sennacherib and bronzes from the ruins of Nimroud; from drawings made on the spot, during a second expedition to Assyria*, ed. A. H. Layard, London 1853, Plate 5. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiamat#/media/File:Chaos\\_Monster\\_and\\_Sun\\_God.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiamat#/media/File:Chaos_Monster_and_Sun_God.png) (access date: 1 IX 2019)





<sup>2</sup> *The Timaeus of Plato*, 53a, transl. R. D. Archer-Hind, London – New York 1888, p. 187.

<sup>3</sup> B. Ogrodnik, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*. See A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, Cambridge 1929, p. 220: “The general activity is not an entity in the sense in which occasion or eternal objects are entities. It is general metaphysical character which underlies all occasion, in a particular mode for each occasion”.

In *Timaeus* another causal factor of the world is presented as *anankê* (47e, necessity) defined as *planômenê aitia* (48a, wandering, irresponsible, errant or variable cause), which is also a kind of force of an unconditioned character. It was with this *anankê* that the problem arose that world that is created must have a place that participates in what is created. Plato comes to this in the following fragments, where initially it seems that the place (*chôra*) is neutral (*Timaeus*, 50c–51b) and is only a kind of mirror ensuring visibility for the created world (*Timaeus*, 51e–52b). However, the functioning of the *chôra* only as a neutral channel for the transition of being into a phenomenon contains a certain impossibility. Thus, Plato’s further reflection (*Timaeus*, 52d–53a) shows the *chôra* as not so much a mirror, but rather a kind of cauldron of bubbling elements and, according to the philosopher’s own words “is filled with powers that are not similar nor equivalent” (*Timaeus*, 53a)<sup>2</sup>. In this perspective, the *chôra* is not so much a receiver (*dechomenon*, *Timaeus*, 50d, 52d) or container (*hupodochê*, *Timaeus*, 49a), perhaps not even a womb (*ekmageion*, *Timaeus*, 50c, 52b), but rather a reservoir of power. Although Plato himself does not draw such an unambiguous conclusion, the premises for it led Alfred North Whitehead to assume that the *chôra*, which was defined as a component devoid of quality, is active, dynamic and creative at the same time<sup>3</sup>. Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World* (1925) argues that activity, although not a kind of being, which is attributed to ideas or things, is nevertheless “underlies all occasion”<sup>4</sup>.

In the description of the problem of the *chôra* in Whitehead’s metaphysics, which was prepared by Bogdan Ogrodnik, it was recalled that the activity (creativity) was juxtaposed by Whitehead with the infinite substance of Spinoza, thus with one of the mods assumed by Spinoza as a form of God’s manifestation. In *Process and Reality* Whitehead suggested even more strongly that creativity – analogous to the *chôra* – precedes other constitutive components of being, i.e. eternal objects (the equivalent of Plato’s Forms) and God (analogous to Plato’s Demiurge). In Whitehead’s thought, there was an attempt at a logical order of concepts of philosophy and theology, in which the extraction of decisive meanings of old terms played an important role. Whitehead did this by removing the concepts in question of the traditional metaphors. Such a procedure was similar to Husserl’s reductions (transcendental and eidetic) and prompted Ogrodnik to distinguish the category of “Pure Activity” as an updated version of the Platonic *chôra*, or the creativity of Whitehead.

## 2. Concepts of *chôra* and apophatic thought

In a situation when new terms such as “reservoir of power” or “Pure Activity” appear in philosophical reflection, it is necessary to refrain from further arguments and to reflect on the nature of such met-



aphors and the situation which inclines to them. It seems that both terms stem from the high position of science in the modern world (as in the case of the term “reservoir of power”) and the strengthening of the role of transcendentalism in philosophy (as in the case of the term “Pure Activity”). The most important problem, however, is that both notions conceal the traditions of theological thinking and create a new metaphysics in times of crisis of old systems, including the crisis of metaphysics itself. As a result, it should be stated that the old religious traditions – which seem to be already past – return in hidden forms, not only in philosophy, but also in the whole culture. So it is not a coincidence, that the contemporary philosophy openly displays an interest in theology, while researchers of present culture (including popular culture) demonstrate the religious origin of figures that appear in it<sup>5</sup>. It is notable, however, that the focus of these interests is primarily inspired by apophatic theology.

Philosophy, to a much greater extent than other fields of culture or science, creates unresolvable problems. One of such recurring issues is the concept of God, who already in Democritus manifested Himself under many names<sup>6</sup>. Along with this concept, questions arose about God’s manifestation in the world (epiphany), the extent of His influence on the fate of humans (a fundamental problem even for Homer, later defined as providentialism), or the causes of evil (theodicy). At the end of the 20th century, however, philosophy was in a situation where certain concepts created in the circle of secular and atheistic philosophy, including in particular *différance* and *chôra*, began to be interpreted as theological terms<sup>7</sup>. At the same time a long range of concepts of religious thought (such as *kenosis*, *ekstasis*, *perichoresis*, or mysticism) was assimilated by secular philosophers, and also became a tool for research on popular culture. Even though critical reflection on metaphysics was already in Heidegger inspired by apophatic theology<sup>8</sup>, nowadays the extent of the exchange of inspiration between religious thought and radical atheism has increased so much that it has led to a situation where commentators are struggling to keep the differences between them. However, their efforts are not successful and confound the audience when equally serious arguments are found in favour of the view that the *chôra* is identical with God, or perhaps yet with Satan<sup>9</sup>.

From the point of view of the reflections on the characteristics of the Parc de La Villette, the problem that should be presented now is the question: what conclusions can be drawn from placing the expressions with negative prefixes (such as “disruption”, “dissociation”, “disfunction”, “disjunction”, “dispersion”) characteristic of Bernard Tschumi’s statements in the context of the apophatic reflections that manifested themselves at that time? The answers that would have been accepted should also suggest what moral values were elevated or celebrated in the Parc de La Villette, although it was supposed to break with any external content. In the further consequence, the question must be



<sup>5</sup> See, among others: D. Oramus, *Imiona Boga. Motywy metafizyczne w fantastyce drugiej połowy XX wieku*, Kraków 2011, and numerous works by J. Sarbiewska, including *(Post)sekularna filozofia negatywna, media wizualne i ekstasis (dekonstrukcja jako wariant neofenomenologii)*, “Argument” 2016, no. 6.

<sup>6</sup> See W. Wrotkowski, *Jeden wieloimienny. Bóg Heraklita z Efezu*, Warszawa 2008.

<sup>7</sup> See, among others, I. Edwards, *Derrida’s (Ir)religion: A Theology (of Différance)*, “Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and Arts” 2003, no. 1.

<sup>8</sup> J. D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought*, New Jersey 1986.

<sup>9</sup> Among the theologians who are partly in favour of the first option are J. D. Caputo, R. Kearney and J. Manoussakis, while the second possibility was clearly expressed in the publication of H. Perkowska *Bóg filozofów XX wieku. Wybrane koncepcje*, Warszawa 2000, p. 426, or J. Grzybowski, *Bóg Abrahama – Bóg Derridy*, “Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne” 2010, no. 23, p. 320.



<sup>10</sup> See J. D. Caputo, *The Return of Anti-Religion: From Radical Atheism to Radical Theology*, "Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory" 2011, no. 2, p. 35: "Derrida admired negative theology – its tropes and gestures, its – »detours, locutions and syntax« – as a brilliant exercise of several deconstructive strategies *avant la lettre*, he insisted that deconstruction is not negative theology, not even the most negative of negative theologies". See J. Derrida, *Différance*, [in:] *idem*, *Margins of Philosophy*, transl. A. Bass, Brighton 1982, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> See G. Vattimo, *Circumstances*, [in:] *Religion*, ed. J. Derrida, G. Vattimo, Cambridge 1998, p. VII–VIII; see also S. Zabala, *Introduction: Gianni Vattimo and Weak Philosophy*, [in:] *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, ed. S. Zabala, Montreal 2006, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> J. Derrida, *Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone* [in French: 1996], transl. S. Weber, [in:] *Acts of Religion*, ed. G. An-idjar, New York – London 2002.

<sup>13</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. T. Pinkard, Cambridge 2018; *idem*, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Bamberg-Würzburg 1807.

asked again: what kind of society or democracy are proposed and promoted by the contents of the Parc de La Villette? The possibility of answering the first question requires the presentation of an outline of the situation in which the problem of the *chôra* began to be considered in a religious context and in the course of time turned into an issue: are there elements identical to the God of the Christian religion and the *chôra*? In attempts to consider this problem, the importance of apophatic theology increased, and at some point it was even considered a variety of deconstruction *avant la lettre*<sup>10</sup>.

For the first time the term *chôra* in the context of the reflection on religion was used by Derrida during the Capri Seminary on 28 February and 1 March 1994. As Gianni Vattimo described it in the introduction to the book, which collected the statements of the participants at the Capri meeting, the starting point was the idea of dedicating the Italian philosophical journal "Italian Philosophical Yearbooks" to the issue of religion<sup>11</sup>. The result, however, was not another yearbook, but a collective work whose leading text was Derrida's essay entitled *Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone*<sup>12</sup>. It clearly referred to Kant's *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (*Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, 1793) and Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (*Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, 1932), but also to the thesis of "the Death of God" contained in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 1807) and theological themes in Heidegger's works. The first part of *Faith and Knowledge* was an introduction to the conversations in Capri, while the second part was written one year after the meeting for the needs of the publication being prepared. The introduction constituted one third of Derrida's total statement and presented a historical account of the problem of religion in philosophy, while the second part was of an analytical nature.

Derrida's aim was to answer the question about the current status of religion, which was described from two different standpoints. The first approach was characterized by Derrida's own view taking into account the logical and historical development of reflection on religion. The second point of view was an attempt to explain the phenomenon of the "Return of Religion" in a political context. Derrida, presenting the first perspective, drew attention to the role of Kant's views proclaiming the decline of religion based on an institutionalized and organized cult and the transition to a purely moral religion, although resulting from Christian revelation, but moving away from its historical roots towards assuming moral responsibility by a reflexive and rationally oriented human community. The purification of morality from its religious dependency is one of the early versions of the concept of "the Death of God" and the unambiguous linking of morality with reason. The detachment of moral self-determination from revealed religion and authority of the Church was also described by Hegel. Derrida pointed in particular to the theses of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*<sup>13</sup>



and *Faith and Knowledge* (1802)<sup>14</sup>, although the reflection on religion occupied much more space (was much more prominent) in Hegel's thought and also expressed itself in his other works. The abandonment of God described by Hegel, an emptying as a new version of *kenosis*, did not deprive the world of holiness, but placed it in the pure intellect<sup>15</sup>. "The Death of God" was not, therefore, final, but merely moved Him to another area of being, and His annihilation, purification and abstraction was a necessary condition for the revelation of another kind. Hegel's simultaneous criticism of institutionalised religious denominations opened for Derrida an opportunity to describe the political position of religion in the contemporary world.

Derrida showed a search for the divine beyond the transcendent being also in Heidegger, when he wrote about Heidegger's "revealability" (*Offenbarkeit*) as the more source form of revelation (*Offenbarung*) and put forward the thesis that this leads to the repetition of Christian motifs purified in a way similar to *via negativa*<sup>16</sup>. Heidegger, unlike Kant, detaches holiness not only from religion but also from morality. Derrida follows a similar path, but does not neglect ethical issues. The *chôra*, more than Heidegger's Being (*Sein, être*), is intended to replace sacredness and holiness, although its distinctness from the world of religion is emphasised.

*Chôra*, the "ordeal of *chôra*", would be, at least according to the interpretation I believed justified in attempting, the name for place, a place name, and a rather singular one at that, for that spacing which, not allowing itself to be dominated by any theological, ontological or anthropological instance, without age, without history and more "ancient" than all oppositions (for example, that of sensible/intelligible), does not even announce itself as "beyond Being" in accordance with a path of negation, a *via negativa*. As a result, *chôra* remains absolutely impassible and heterogeneous to all the processes of historical revelation or of anthropo-theological experience, which at the very least suppose its abstraction. It will never have entered religion and will never permit itself to be sacralized, sanctified, humanized, theologized, cultivated, historicized<sup>17</sup>.

*Chôra* is nothing (no being, nothing present), but not the Nothing which in the anxiety of *Dasein* would still open the question of Being (*être*). This Greek noun says in our memory that which is not reappropriable, even by our memory, even by our "Greek" memory; it says the immemoriality of a desert in the desert of which it is neither a threshold nor a mourning. The question remains open, and with it that of knowing whether this desert can be thought and left to announce itself "before" the desert that we know (that of the revelations and the retreats, of the lives and deaths of God, of all the figures of *kenosis* or of transcendence, of *religio* or of historical "religions"); or whether, "on the contrary", it is "from" this last desert that we can glimpse that which precedes the first "*l'avant-premier*", what I call the desert in the desert. The indecisive oscillation, that reticence (*epoché* or *Verhaltenheit*) already allud-



<sup>14</sup> *Idem*, *Faith and Knowledge*, transl. W. Cerf, H. S. Harris, Albany 1977; *idem*, *Glauben und Wissen oder die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität in der Vollständigkeit ihrer Formen als Kantische, Jacobische und Fichtesche Philosophie* [1802], [in:] *idem*, *Jenaer kritische Schriften*, Bd. 3, Hrsg. H. Brockard, H. Buchner, Hamburg 1986.

<sup>15</sup> See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 451: "The death of this representational thought contains at the same time the death of the abstraction of the divine essence which is not yet posited as a self. That death is the agonized feeling of the unhappy consciousness that God himself is dead. This harsh expression is the expression of the inmost simple-knowing-of-oneself, the return of consciousness into the depth of the night of the I = I which no longer differentiates and knows nothing external to it. This feeling thus is in fact the loss of substance and of the substance taking a stance against consciousness".

<sup>16</sup> J. Derrida, *Faith and Knowledge...*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 58.





<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, transl. F. A. Capuzzi, J. G. Gray, [in:] M. Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. W. MacNeil, Cambridge 1998, p. 250: "[T]he reversal of a metaphysical statement remains a metaphysical statement". See also: M. Heidegger, *Brief über den Humanismus*, [in:] *idem*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9: *Wegmarken*, Hrsg. F.-W. von Herrmann, Frankfurt am Main 1976, p. 328: "[D]ie Umkehrung eines metaphysischen Satzes bleibt ein metaphysischer Satz".

<sup>21</sup> J. D. Caputo, *Apostles of the Impossible: On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion*, [in:] *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, ed. *idem*, M. J. Scanlon, Bloomington 1999.

<sup>22</sup> M. Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*, Stanford 2008; *idem*, *The Radical Evil of Deconstruction: A Reply to John Caputo*, "Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory" 2011, no. 2.

ed to above (between revelation and revealability, *Offenbarung* and *Offenbarkeit*, between event and possibility or virtuality of the event), must it not be respected for itself? Respect for this singular indecision or for this hyperbolic outbidding between two originarities, the order of the "revealed" and the order of the "revealable", is this not at once the chance of every responsible decision and of another "reflecting faith" of a new "tolerance"?<sup>18</sup>

On the bottom without bottom of an always virgin impassibility, *chôra* of tomorrow in languages we no longer know or do not yet speak. This place is unique, it is the One without name. It makes way, perhaps, but without the slightest generosity, neither divine nor human<sup>19</sup>.

Derrida's aim was to point to an instance whose level of negation of the existing metaphysical categories would exceed the previous achievements. The problem is that even the most advanced negation will still be a metaphysical theorem<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, resistance against the sacralization of the concept of *chôra* must have been equally imperfect, since the indicated "Non-Being" must have contained earlier negations characteristic of Non-Being of God, especially those known from negative theology. Consequently, as the above quotation shows, it was possible to create a new religion that would be less dogmatized and institutionalized, but would not get rid of witnesses and believers completely. Some of the formulations used by Derrida are also specific to the statements of mystics and prophets, which contributed to the emergence of a specific non-religious mysticism with a predilection for references to old mystical concepts, such as night or desert. All the negations of a similar kind, such as "God without Being" (*Dieu sans l'être*, Marion), "Religion without Religion" or "non-religious mysticism", have brought the further discussion on the *chôra* closer to the problems of modern theology, especially that presented by John David Caputo, Richard Kearney, Jean-Luc Marion or John Pan-teleimon Manoussakis. Alongside the deliberations on the *chôra*, new quasi-theological concepts have emerged, such as "completely other" (*tout autre*) or "Impossible", leading to a situation in which Derrida and Marion were named "Apostles of the Impossible"<sup>21</sup>. At each stage of the development of the discussion on the *chôra*, new possibilities for understanding it have emerged, and although it was supposed to be pre-reasonable and inexpressible, it has led to a situation in which the Parc de La Villette has also gained new, post-secular meaning. At present, because of the extent of this discussion, it seems difficult to describe in detail, but some of its elements should be mentioned to illustrate the situation in which a public and secular park created by atheistic creators has become a **Temple of the Future**. Those participants of the discussion who, like Martin Hägglund, tried to save the radically atheistic character of the philosophy of deconstruction were marginalized<sup>22</sup>. The problem is therefore the question: what specific values are worshiped in the "Park of the XXI Century" in a way simi-





lar to religious cult? The answer requires to outline the history of the discussion that took place at the end of the 20th century around the notion of *chôra* among theologians.

A breakthrough moment in bringing the concept of *chôra* in its initially purely philosophical version closer to the positions of Christian theologians interested in apophatic theology was Derrida's participation in a conference which, on the initiative of John D. Caputo, held in September 1997 at the Catholic Augustinian Villanova University in Philadelphia. The main participants were Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, whose statements focused on the problems of negative theology and the current tension between it and the philosophy of deconstruction<sup>23</sup>. Ignoring the many important elements of the dispute between those philosophers who have focused on the concept of "gift", it is more appropriate to present the differences between some concepts of deconstruction (such as *différance* or *chôra*) and Marion's apophatic philosophy referred to as denomination. The purpose of such a juxtaposition is to capture the object of worship hidden in the *chôric* Parc de La Villette.

For the first time, Derrida pointed out the similarities and differences between deconstruction and apophatics in *Différance* when he stated that *différance* far exceeds the achievements of negative theology, which, while pointing to human's inability to find the right words to describe the essence of God, question His existence only in the sense that they attribute to Him a higher form of existence than that which could be understood by human<sup>24</sup>. *Différance* distinguishes itself against the background of the apophatic thought not so much by Being of a higher kind as by Being a purified condition for differences. However, we should temporarily suspend the question: does Being a condition for differences completely liberate from Being, even if we recognize that Being is later and secondary to *différance*?

Reservations about negative theology expressed later in *How to Avoid Speaking* and several other writings by Derrida emphasized that this kind of thought – instead of much more commonly used terms of God, like good or love of the highest kind – proclaims a different way of God's Being, exceeding even Being itself or, in the case of Marion's philosophy of denomination, depriving God of Being. Even if the traditional characteristics attributed to God (including His Being) are negated, a theologian like Marion does not reject a clear intuition about the object of worship. Marion, proclaiming that denomination is an attitude of worship without trying to know and precise the purpose of prayer, repeatedly withdraws from its radical non-determination. Arousing fascination with the area requiring recognition, characteristic of the denomination, assumes a far-reaching positive nature of this seemingly indefinite space. By proclaiming that the most important thing is the attitude itself, while the names are secondary, he withdraws from acknowledging the indifferent character of the place that inclines users to worship. For Marion, violence that draws someone



<sup>23</sup> J.-L. Marion, *In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of "Negative Theology"*, [in:] *God, the Gift and Postmodernism...* Marion's statement and Derrida's response were then commented on many times. See i.a. L. Ferretter, *How to avoid speaking of the other: Derrida, Dionysius and the problematic of negative theology*, "Paragraph. A Journal of Modern Critical Theory" 2001, no. 1.

<sup>24</sup> J. Derrida, *Différance...*, p. 6. See also P. Sikora, *Logos niepojęty. Teza: "Jezus Chrystus jako pełnia objawienia" w perspektywie teologii apofatycznej. Analiza filozoficzna*, Kraków 2010, p. 138.



<sup>25</sup> J. Derrida, *Donner la mort* [in:] *Donner la mort. L'éthique du don: Jacques Derrida et la pensée du don*, [Colloque de Royau-  
mont, 6-9 XII 1990], transl. J.-M. Rabaté,  
M. Wetzlar, Paris 1992, p. 76: "Tout autre  
(au sens de chaque autre) est tout au-  
tre (absolument autre)"; *idem*, *The Gift  
of Death*, transl. D. Wills, Chicago 1995,  
p. 78: "Every other (in the sense of  
each other) is every bit other (absolutely  
other)".

into a state of adoration cannot be other than good. Derrida, on the other hand, tries to neutralize and burn the matrix of all Being. For this reason, Derrida's *chôra* tries to be more radically other, even more precedes Being, and is even more empty and nameless. If, however, one cannot stop talking about her, it means that her violence is also oriented and she takes names. If, however, one cannot stop talking about her, it means that her violence is also oriented and she takes names. Orientation itself must also be regarded as positive and "life-creating", and therefore also as originary and enlivening. It was precisely this situation that prompted successive theologians and lay researchers to bring the *chôra* closer to God. Also the kenotic Parc de La Villette, with its respect for negations, void or emptying, cannot be considered neutral but, on the contrary, as forcing to religion, that is, a community of spreading knowledge about the positive aspects of power. Pure prayer, demanded by Derrida in the name of undetermined otherness, worshipping without any determination of identity or name, is impossible, because otherness ultimately obtains the face of a concrete person, who forces to keep distance and express respect. The statement that "every other is completely other" ("*tout autre est tout autre*"<sup>25</sup>) not only grants absoluteness to otherness, but also grants absolute otherness the right to be a person requiring respect.

It should be remembered that the discussion between Derrida and Marion also focused on the issue of the gift, which in its essence must go beyond what is expected and possible. The Impossible makes one desire, makes one think. This Impossible is also debatable and raises the question whether it is religiously neutral or just a new name of God hidden in philosophy. However, if these issues are difficult to resolve, it can be concluded that they require a certain spatial care, which does not have to be only a field of discursiveness but can also be a park meadow. A public space with a proper structure is able to develop a place of otherness, thus opening the future to the unknown and transcending what is expected. The Parc de La Villette puts the user before a certain purification of meanings, an irritating emptiness demanding fulfillment. Of course, the park, currently filled with many objects, is no longer a void saturated with contradictions, but its structural elements still encourage to reveal its possibilities, to penetrate the maze of layers of attractions to the original state of the lack of ordinary park accessories.

There are similarities in Derrida's descriptions of *différance* and *chôra*. It can be argued that if the *chôra* is a kind of place (although extremely pre-originary), then the *différance* is a part of it as a kind of pre-originary movement of appearance and disappearance. But even such a "preoriginary" *différance* is not free from indications to God in the apophatic theology. Atypical features of *différance* are not only its namelessness, i.e. the impossibility of closing it in words, but also the decisive putting of all words into instability. *Différance* appears in the reverberation and disappearance more than in grand phenomena



and tends to be an imprint left by nothingness, or rather a trace which not left by nothing. A long series of similar properties of *différance* led Ian Edwards of the Catholic University Duquesne in Pittsburgh to conclude that “It would be easy to confuse *différance*, and its nameless place, for what is commonly understood to be God”<sup>26</sup>. God is a metaphysical ground even for eternity, while *différance* immerses eternity in itself, depriving it of its right to exist<sup>27</sup>.

The namelessness of *différance* and its inability to establish itself as a place has consequences for all discourses, including philosophical and mystical ones. Metaphysics, always remaining only a question, forces to ask questions about the origin of questions and about the origin in general. Among the possible ways of evasions from answering such questions will always be those which indicate God and His attributes remaining within the boundaries of Christian apophatic theology. Even if atheistic philosophy goes further in negation, negative theology will remain an intermediate stage. Any negation may be with some kind of reversal, palintropic movement. Derrida wrote that:

Such an intentional attitude bears several names of the same family: respect, modesty, restraint, inhibition, *Achtung* (Kant), *Scheu*, *Verhaltenheit*, *Gelassenheit* (Heidegger), restraint or *holding back*, *halte* in general<sup>28</sup>.

In addition to *Aufenthalt* (stopover, ethos, often involving the *heilig*), *Verhaltenheit* (modesty or respect, scruple, reserve or silent discretion that suspends itself in and as reticence) would be only one example, albeit a major one for what concerns us here and taking into account the role played by this concept in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* with respect to the “last god”, or the “other god”, the god who comes or the god who passes<sup>29</sup>.

Referring to Jean-François Courtine’s article<sup>30</sup>, Derrida further adds that, according to Heidegger, to save what is sacred requires not only the perception of the dangers of technological overgrowth, but also the liberation of the saint from the fetters of religion („especially Christian-Roman”)<sup>31</sup>. The problem seems to be similar: just as it is only through careful conduct that one can distinguish between *différance* and God, similar carefulness makes it possible to separate philosophical restraint from usual acts of religious prayer or adoration. Just restraint alone is already stopping the course of thought and withdrawing into a pre-time dimension of thought, into the space of the *chôra*, another God or perhaps just another name of the same one. It can be assumed that not only the concept of God can be redefined but, consequently, new characteristics can be attributed to God and then covered by new forms of celebration and new spaces of worship. The Parc de La Villette, as a kind of imitation of the *chôra*, prompts to take the position of a non-indifferent observer, engages in reflection and forces to reflect, being thus the area of happening of the “reflexive faith” (i.e. conscious) described by Kant.



<sup>26</sup> I. Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> J. Derrida, *Faith and Knowledge*, p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, note 39.

<sup>30</sup> J.-F. Courtine, *Les traces et le passage du Dieu dans les “Beiträge zur Philosophie” de Martin Heidegger*, “Archivio dei Filosofia” 1994, no. 1/3. Cf. H. de Vries, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>31</sup> J. Derrida, *Faith and Knowledge...*, p. 85.



<sup>32</sup> I. Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibidem*: "Deconstruction has nothing to do with mysticism".

<sup>35</sup> J. Derrida, *Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy*, [in:] *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. H. Coward, T. Foshay, New York 1992; I. Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> P. Sikora, *op. cit.*, p. 147; K. Rahner, *Über den Begriff des Geheimnisses in der katholischen Theologie*, [in:] *idem*, *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 4, Einsiedeln 1960, pp. 68–69.

The concepts of deconstruction, like the considerations of negative theology, are metaphysical and "attempt to assert what can not be asserted"<sup>32</sup>. In this regard Edwards equated the orientation of Derrida's deconstruction with Eckhart's sermons. Both, according to Edwards, "have a passion for what is impossible"<sup>33</sup>. In spite of serious differences, they both demand initial trust to which – contrary to Edwards' assertions – an ecstatic and mystical moment should be attributed<sup>34</sup>. It also seems that Edwards, who specifies the similarities and differences between dogmatic religions and Derrida's philosophy, considered precisely the possibility of a faith exceeding that of traditional religious principles. It is worth to trace the course of his reasoning in order to emphasize the religious inclinations of thinking about *différance* and the *chôra*.

In Derrida's article *Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy* – as Edwards put it – there is a thesis that all aspirations for truth contain a certain apocalyptic tone and conceal a vision of the end of the world. But the truth turns out to be unattainable, the end of the world does not come and its only mystery turns out to be the lack of mystery<sup>35</sup>. Reason retreats from such a conclusion, because that conclusion is also too final. Previous religious and philosophical systems created visions of the world that, above all, had pragmatic values and served to organize relations between their creators and users. They only simulated the control over mystery and truth. Nevertheless, the human inclination to what is impossible and exceeds the horizon of expectations is rationally justified. Treated as a certain area, it contains philosophical and religious beliefs. In its space there is an "apocalypse without apocalypse" and the truth appears, although it is not preached. "The Impossible" turns out to be a necessity not only of deconstruction, but also the motor force of human aspirations. It can be considered as a manifestation of Will according to Schopenhauer or *élan vital* according to Bergson accumulated in human consciousness. Paweł Sikora recalled in a similar context the notion of *epektasis* of Gregory of Nyssa, which characterized the infinite aspiration beyond any conditioned reality and equated it with calling man the "being of transcendence" by Karl Rahner<sup>36</sup>.

The Impossible is sometimes desirable, it is empirically confirmed need, although perhaps it still requires a wider description. The desire for God and God Himself were sometimes part of the Impossible. In order to manifest itself in a form purified from old beliefs, it needs an area of visualization and sacralisation, such as the Parc de La Villette. Thanks to such an area, it becomes a vision and a looming image of the future. Parks by definition mean to regenerate forces and the Impossible is also a kind of force aiming at spreading. Human energies are combined with the development of the Impossible in space. Certainly, the Impossible cannot be guided by the path of knowledge, the Impossible rather requires a leap similar to a leap of faith. In the case of the place in the city discussed here, it would be a leap into reflection on



the importance of exceeding the horizon of expectations, running towards the unpredictable. What is known and expected in certain political situations may not only be troublesome but also dangerous for freedom. Societies without efforts to free the Impossible become inclined to increase their coercion, perpetuate the decayed order and derive painful satisfaction from it. In a kind of religious war, immobilized societies become victims of dogmatism and despotism. Deconstructive faith creates an opportunity to restore strength in a situation of decline of societies and democracy into a state of lack of openness to the future.

According to traditions of apophatic theology, the affirmation of the Impossible is done through silencing that touches the new name of God. Customary names are transgressed and abolished, but new names cannot come quite openly. Hiding in underclosure and understatement opens the space in which a certain overflow of excess can take place. It cannot be expected or directly legible, but it is also what must be demanded, what obliges and enforces commitments. In the end, it also requires sacrifice, abandoning the custom. As Edwards wrote:

A deconstructive faith is sacrifice. First, it sacrifices the god that is known. (It is a faith in God without God). Second, it sacrifices the object that one believes in. (It is a belief in the unbelievable [the impossible]). Third, it sacrifices faith itself. (It is a faith without faith.) And finally, it sacrifices definiteness. (It is being undecidedly sure.) [...] In a deconstructive faith, there is nothing outside the witness<sup>37</sup>.

A testimony of a deconstructive faith does not create a coercion characteristic of ordinary religious systems, but, on the contrary, it liberates. It becomes the next stage in the development of freedom, the dispersion of the community and the development of reflection. "This is pure freedom, radical liberation"<sup>38</sup>.

### 3. The legacy of Eckhart's thoughts

If the possible goal of deconstructive faith is to "think about the Impossible" then the question arises: what else can be said about the Impossible? It seems that certain possibilities for answering this question lie in the comparison of the concepts of Derrida's philosophy, especially the concept of *chôra*, to the ways Eckhart speaks about the Godhead (*Gottheit*). Eckhart's thought seems to be a hidden source for some aspects of Heidegger's philosophy, as it was described by Caputo, but there are also serious similarities between Eckhart's attempts to find God beyond the qualities attributed to Him by affirmative (cataphatic) theology and Derrida's attempts to indicate the conditions for the emergence of the world and its consciousness in language. There are, of course, huge differences between these philosophies, because



<sup>37</sup> I. Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 152.





<sup>39</sup> I. Almond, *Negative Theology, Derrida and the Critique of Presence: a Poststructuralist Reading of Meister Eckhart*, "The Heythrop Journal. A Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Theology" 1999, no. 40, p. 161.

Eckhart understands the Godhead and its inherent nothingness as a kind of being that transcends the possibility of being signified by language. Heidegger – continuing the threads of Eckhart's thoughts – sought particularly originary words to describe Being (*Sein*), while Derrida saw the world and language as a turbulent game of unstable elements. Despite all the differences between these philosophies, serious arguments may be given in favour of the thesis that "Derrida and Eckhart not only tackle analogous problems but come up with analogous solutions"<sup>39</sup>. Derrida avoided pointing to single words that could be treated as conditions of metaphysics, constantly changed those that began to stiffen in his statements, however, writing about *différance* or the *chôra*, he wrote as if constantly about the same thing: about the existence of sources of metaphysics in the pre-originary language, in the language beyond the language. Eckhart's search for the origin of God and finding that origin in the Godhead (*Gottheit*, which can also be described as the Divinity) have common aspects with Derrida's search for the causes of the lability of linguistic expressions, their strength that is only apparent and real weakness covered up by metaphysics. They would have something to do with indicating that a language has an undetermined relationship with a world that is not so much existing independently but largely dependent on language, and even if it were to be treated as an independent, it would still have to be said that it appears to be very similar to language. The world as we know it is given to us as a text to be read. The similarities between the Divinity and the *chôra* should therefore be rethought, since the Parc de La Villette, as also similar to the *chôra*, can reveal its characteristics relating not only to *Gottheit* in Eckhart's terms, but also to the most recent search for God outside of religious, theological and philosophical traditions.

Overwhelmed by the scholastic traditions of his century, Eckhart was aware that they did not provide an answer to the question of God's origin. Recognizing that God of the New Testament has been appreciated, through the long development of theology, as the Highest Good or Highest Love, thus, generally in accordance with Anselm of Canterbury's way of thinking, as a being which could be surpassed by nothing, and appreciating, in accordance with John Scotus Eriugena's way of thinking, that it is possible to deduce God from things of which He is the cause, and not wanting to violate thinking about God as the intimate goal of faith full of love, Eckhart understood that such a God was – speaking the language of Marion – largely an idol, that it was limited to the possibility of being perceived by a purely human mind. In thinking of God limited to the category of purely human origin there was not only a lack of respect for God, but above all a lack of logic. Logically speaking, God had to exceed more seriously the limitations of human thought, even when that thought was touched by divine revelation. There must therefore have been another God, one who is now manifesting Itself as Pure Otherness and Impossibility, yet still in need of adoration, although it is rather a pure prayer to an unknown



who and what. The seeds of such thinking were in the works of Christian mysticism, including the writings of St. John of the Cross.

Eckhart, taking Avicenna's view that "God is a being to whom nothing is, or can be similar" ("Got ist ein wesen, dem niht glich enist noch niht glich enmac warden")<sup>40</sup>, undertook to describe a space devoid of name and attributes, from which emerged an accessible and understandable God of the New Testament. Despite the passage of nearly seven centuries, Eckhart's intentions attract the interest of both theologians and philosophers, because God beyond dogmatic approaches has something desirable for believers and non-believers, and furthermore is endowed with the characteristics of a space such as the *chôra* and thus constitutes an essential component for thinking about the conditions of thinking. Although this attributeless space, defined by Eckhart as a Godhead, is radically incomprehensible, he was able to attribute many properties to it<sup>41</sup>. *Gottheit* (Godhead, Divinity) was characterized primarily as an abyss (*Abgrunt*, *Abgrund*) and nothingness, but Almond, wishing to expose more contemporary themes, described its features as namelessness, silence, unity.

Among these discriminants, namelessness is particularly important because it not only contradicts the human tendency to name, but is above all a dimension that must be considered impossible to name. Namelessness is therefore another name for the Impossibility. Already in Eckhart, it exceeded the mere negation of the characteristics given to God and "is something which is neither this nor that"<sup>42</sup>. "The Godhead is a space where names are forbidden", commented Almond<sup>43</sup>. There are many reasons for this kind of impossibility. The Godhead is a pure unity devoid of attributes, so it is indivisible, while divisibility (being the same as spacing, *espacement*) is an articulation and particularization characteristic only of human capabilities. Unspatiality is divinity and is nameless, but naming is the introduction of conditions of human thinking. Divinity is beyond the name, because naming belongs exclusively to the human world, and even God of the Old Testament tried to detach this activity from Himself. Names of God with time become a necessity and their number increases, but nevertheless it is equally important to remind, that they constitute a limitation inconsistent with the essence of God and obscure the Godhead, regularly demanding – both in times of Eckhart and now – to inscribe these names under the crossing-out (*kreuzweise Durchkreuzung*) or erasure (*sous rature*)<sup>44</sup>. Such erasure is an act of new kenosis: it gives enlightenment, enables the renewal of revelation and can itself be a pure revelation.

In Almond's opinion, the second aspect of the deity is silence<sup>45</sup>. This silence is a necessity because language is based on articulation, division and differentiation. They are not fitting for the Godhead. The appearance of dialectic language tendencies requires a strong foundation in the situation of lack of division, spatial emptiness. For this reason, another motif of Eckhart's theology can be associated with si-



<sup>40</sup> I. Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 153; as cit. in: J. M. Clark, *Meister Eckhart: an introduction to the study of his works with an anthology of his sermons*, London 1957, p. 179 (Avicenna, *Métaphysique*, Lib. IX, 1, [in:] *idem*, *Liber de philosophia prima, sive Scientia divina*, 5–10, ed. S. Van Riet, Louvain 1980). Clark points out that Avicenna's view is based on the 112th Sura of the Koran (إِذْ قَالَ الْوَيْلُكَ لَكَ يَا مُجَلِّسُ) (J. M. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 239).

<sup>41</sup> I. Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153, note 12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 153.

<sup>44</sup> Derrida's expression "*sous rature*" is derived from Heidegger's considerations of the hiding of Being (*Sein*). See J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, Paris 1967, p. 37: "Heidegger le rappelle aussi lorsque dans *Zur Seinsfrage*, pour la même raison, il ne laisse lire le mot »être« que sous une croix (*kreuzweise Durchstreichung*). Cette croix n'est pourtant pas un »signe simplement négatif«. See also: M. Heidegger, *Zur Seinsfrage*, Frankfurt am Main 1959, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> I. Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 154



<sup>46</sup> B. Tschumi, *Cinegram Folie*, chapter *Non-sense / No-meaning*, pp. VII–VIII. See also H. Moss, *Deconstructing the impact of Tschumi's Parc de la Villette* <http://sites.google.com/a/hildotmoss.com/www/Villette> (access date: 8 IX 2018): "La Villette also operates within a system of non-sense and no-meaning".

<sup>47</sup> See I. Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 156.

lence, which is the image of the Godhead as a barren desert (*einoede*). Also this space precedes God, who only outside of nothingness can say the Word and make the beginning of languages. Languages have their origin in God, but it is the powerful nothingness that is the groundless ground of God. Through its relations with the philosophy of the *chôra* and its replication, the Parc de La Villette evokes silence, evokes a reflection on the initial situations, including the first articulations such as "point, line, plane". It is also worth recalling Tschumi's efforts to preserve the emptiness of meaning in the park (*Non-Sense/No-Meaning*) and to strive for the park not to represent anything, not to be an image of any exteriority<sup>46</sup>. Similarly, the emptiness of silence can be characterized as a lack of representation, a lack of exterior, a state of pure anteriority.

The third aspect of *Gottheit* in Eckhart's view is unity<sup>47</sup>. The distinction between unity and union comes from Eckhart himself and comes from "the harmonious coexistence within God of differences, a divine tolerance of multiplicity"<sup>48</sup>. Unity is just a summary of diversity. The same characteristic of Logos was proclaimed by Democritus. In the case of the Parc de La Villette, it should be recalled once again that the dissonances on which it is based are at the same time an attempt to introduce harmony, since this harmony is possible only when the irritated contradictions show their impossibility and their deeper hidden compatibility. This compatibility is an immense force of the Logos, but it is based on certain vibrations, stimulation of movement and incompatibility of elements in order to bring them to the necessary order. This reminding of Democritus' views can help to understand the *Gottheit* as a tension-filled peace of mind.

The *Gottheit* is free from movement, it is unmoved, it cannot even be an object of thought, it is a place of rest, but it is also a hidden force, a cause and a goal of pursuit. The mind cannot break through to it, but it does not contradict the fact that it is this situation that stimulates the intellect. Derrida described the *chôra* in an identical way, pointing out that the problem of the foundation and the source of divinity lies in such a space which regularly withdraws from the anxiety of the human mind. The anxiety, however, would have been impossible without encountering the Impossibility. The impossibility, even perfect one, or perhaps only perfect one, is the source and characteristic not only of the divine, but also the basis of every intellectual possibility. The desert has seeds germinating beyond it, silence triggers languages, motionlessness is the cause of movement, darkness explodes with light, lack of God explodes with the desire to bring God closer. Any abyss (*Abgrund*) is a necessity, and necessity is a force, an explosive excess. In the end, there is only a pure necessity, perhaps another name of God. Like *différance*, the *chôra* or the *Gottheit*, also the necessity is not a kind of existence, it is an area outside of metaphysics. The assumption that the Impossibility is the most current task of philosophy is undoubtedly correct when it is treated as a development of attempts to transcend metaphysics, and in a completely secular way. The prob-



lem is that Derrida's attempts are focused around the same problem, which occupied the minds of Democritus, Plato and Eckhart, i.e. the problem of pointing to an intense, saturated and dynamic nothingness, which is separated from every other being (not being itself, however, a being), but also in each of them participates disturbingly. The dark abyss of *Gottheit* is the space from which God emerges as if by definition condemned to death and incomprehension. This endangered God must be killed, out of "necessity", in every act of faith or condemned to be erased by subsequent apophatic theologians. Continuous breaking through God to the Divine indicates a strong error in thinking. If it is out of "necessity" that the thought is oriented towards the search for a theory prior to an existing one and this activity is not successful, it can be assumed that the basis of any theory is error and "necessity" is errant. The nothingness bases its existence on a still unrecognized error, the explosion of which echoes in every being, every act of faith or thought. There is also an error in God and in the divinity themselves, a certain discrepancy that activates every being and does not allow it to die. The new names of God should therefore include not only the name "Impossibility", but also "necessity" and "error".

#### 4. The *chôra* of God and the *chôra* of the park

The Parc de La Villette is a puzzling creation, but the problem is not to solve its puzzle, but to try to explain the sources of its mystery. By entering into relations with the philosophy of the *chôra*, the park was condemned, like any other purified creation, to relations with an irresponsible necessity (*anankê*), i.e. the decisive property of a pure intellect, primary information or the introduction of form, waving. The drifting and never reaching the goal, human intellect imitates the oscillating movement of the Logos and contains a desire to return to a completely impossible state of faultlessness, without recognizing that this state is impossible. For there is nothing but error and error is the beginning, being for the mind the cause of painful anguish in the same extent as moving satisfaction. The unachievability of the goal (including the unachievability of *Gottheit*) turns palintropically to the full reverence of silence, that is, to the preoriginal speech close to the place of God's origin, dark night and barren desert. The fact that something cannot be said is at the same time an opening of the possibility that infinitely much remains to be said.

The existence of God and the existence of being are preceded by the existence of a space in which God and being are not yet. The space itself is also not, at least not as perceptible or descriptive. Language expressions – as belonging to the created world – do not have the property to describe the world before its creation. Both of these circumstances, i.e. the functioning of the preoriginal space and the imperfection of the language, lead to the annulment of the validity of

statements expressed in languages, suggest silence or erasure (*sous rature*), but also arouse emotions and activate the intellect. The limitations of reason are not complete and imagination produces images of the preoriginary space, which are then reproduced in languages or works of art. The Parc de La Villette is one of the latter options. Being and God are secondary and derivative to the space before being, which for Eckhart was the Godhead, pure divinity. But are the *Gotttheit* and the *chôra* the same? Particularly since they are both not yet? It is not possible to go far beyond God (on the one hand) and to go beyond metaphysics (on the other hand) neither in theology nor in philosophy. Instead of solving the problem, there is an observation of the wandering intellect, which – like the whole being – draws its strength from inevitable erring, preoriginary error, initial peculiarity.

Human mental abilities, not being exceptionally capable of understanding the Divine or even Being, are also not without the urge to create imaginations that try to be analogons of uncreated beings. Images of this kind are prominent in human activity and are endowed with the ability to compel acts of respect. They can also arouse irritation and objection, they can be violently abandoned and replaced by others. This creates a situation in which gods, prophets, visionaries and artists are replaced by interpreters confronted with the problems of comparing the hidden meanings of competing theories. In the sequences of analogies and differences, the components of pure revelation are traced, which in the times when even poets lost their voice give a substitute for listening to the voice of “the last god” (“*der letzte Gott*” – Heidegger). On this way unprecedented encounters between radical atheism and radical theology occur<sup>49</sup>. In some cases, this requires attention to be focused on specific problems, especially on the similarity of the *chôra* to persons, symbols and fundamental assertions of the Christian religion. This is a problem that goes beyond the intentions of this work, but requires a mention, especially if its examination leads to a reminder that there was already a tradition of equating the *chôra* with Christ or building *chôric* architectural objects. It is therefore necessary to have at least the shortest mention of the statements of John David Caputo, Richard Kearney or John Panteleimon Manoussakis, who described such possibilities. The last problem would be to explain the reasons why works of art (including architecture and urban planning) are exceptionally suitable for creating images of the *chôra*.

In Tschumi's intentions, Parc de La Villette was to be devoid of any reference to any external content. However, emptying the park of its meanings did not prevent it from becoming a part of the happening of a certain philosophical problem, more precisely the functioning of the *chôra* in the real world. The *chôra*, however she is not, because she precedes all beings, influences each of them, imprints her mark in thinking and prompts to create semi-real reflections. She does not remain a completely neutral mirror for ideas, but it she also reflects the idea of reflection, becoming a component of every phenomenon



of presentation (*phainesthai*). The forces contained in her make one think about her role in the appearance of God, because the *chôra* is not only essential for the appearance in general, but also manifests a certain necessity close to the power of God. Caputo did the most to bring the *chôra* (in Derrida's view) closer to the Christian God. Driven by the conviction that the concept of God can be expressed in newer terms, Caputo attempted to not separate the source of God's origin from the moral obligations imposed by the God revealed. This required an indication of such characteristics of the *chôra* that could form the basis of human conduct and revive commandments of a specific historical religion. To this end, Caputo pointed to the neutrality of the *chôra*, which is the main cause why beings undergo differentiation. The *chôra*, removing itself as a permanent basis for beings and revealing itself as a kind of abyss, contributes to the fact that every phenomenon is reflected in nothingness and differentiates itself. Differentiation is the most important function of the *chôra*, and in the interpretation of Caputo it contributes to the fact that even God Himself must be regarded as uncertain and forcing a leap of faith beyond all historically shaped ways of perceiving Him. There are no nonhistorical notions of God, but each of them has been transgressed, although religions in their theological memory erase contradictions in the understanding of God. God, affected by *chôric* differentiation, is not only the cause of the multiplication of interpretations, but also the command to renew His names. Caputo therefore acts as the "Apostle of the Impossible" on the same basis as he imputed to Derrida and Marion. Not abandoning old divine names, but approaching secular and religious apophatics, he himself became the preacher not only of God's new name, but also of "Religion without Religion", that is, of a religion which, by renewing its strength, partly abandons its attachment to God's earlier names and traditional forms of their worship. This placed Caputo in an intermediate position between those who, like Graham Ward, stood guard over orthodoxy and those who, like Martin Hägglund, made efforts to strengthen the purely atheistic nature of deconstruction. The path taken by Caputo has evoked respect in Derrida, but despite its rich argumentation, it is an indication of God far removed from common beliefs. Caputo's recommendations to apply the conclusions of God's recognition as a patron of diversity to the radicalisation of democracy when it is no longer universally desirable are also in a bad situation.

The present-day forms of religiousness make little use of the achievements of theology, both this closer to orthodoxy and the attempts at further reformation. Traditions are not only not being renewed, but are even weakening in favour of simple forms of religious worship and a set of secondary customs. The official representatives of the Churches, usually avoiding support for any heterodoxy, are also not in favour of improving democracy in order to increase freedom within it or to defend the weaker ones. In this situation the "weak God" from the philosophy of Caputo, once Himself especially humiliated,



<sup>50</sup> See M. Kister, *Tohu wa-Bohu: Primordial Elements and »Creatio ex Nihilo«*, "Jewish Studies Quarterly" 2007, no. 3.

<sup>51</sup> B. Treanor, *The God Who May Be: Quis ergo amo cum deum meum amo?*, "Revisita Portuguesa de Filosofia" 2004, no. 4, pp. 993.

<sup>52</sup> R. Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting otherness*, London – New York 2002, p. 204.

<sup>53</sup> R. Kearney, *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*, Bloomington 2001; cf. B. Treanor, *op. cit.*, p. 994.

belongs to these presently sparse ones, who have an understanding for marginalized or excluded participants of religious, moral, or political communities. The area of the basic tradition of Judaism or various trends of Christianity does not seem to be explored properly, despite the fact that it includes content that once provoked theological polemics. The discussion on the *chôra* could also find greater understanding even among biblical scholars, since not only Plato's Demiurge but also the God of the Old Testament was confronted with the abyss. *Tohu wa-Bohu* (וְהָיָה וְהָיָה)<sup>50</sup> was the state of the Earth before creation, and its properties, such as shapelessness, emptiness, or "darkness over the abyss", can be compared with the *chôra*. This would confirm the thesis of the translatability and variability of the basic deductions of God, which is important in the philosophy of deconstruction. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Kearney, the second important representative of the intermediate path "between Scylla of dogmatism and Charybdis of total indecisiveness"<sup>51</sup>, compared the substitute of God discussed here to the metaphors known from old or new stories. He posed a series of rhetorical questions about the similarity of the *chôra* to many situations in which human was confronted with a bottomless void, with a total lack of support.

The Greek stories of Oedipus without eyes, Sisyphus in Hades, Prometheus in chains, Iphigenia in waiting? The biblical stories of *tohu bohu* before creation, Job in the pit, Jonah in the whale, Joseph at the bottom of the well, Naomi all tears, Jesus abandoned on the cross (crying out to the Father) or descended into hell? Or the fictional and dramatic accounts of Conrad's heart of darkness, Primo Levi's death camp? Or more basically still, is *khora* not that pre-original abyss each of us encounters in fear and trembling when faced with the bottomless void of our existence?<sup>52</sup>

So don't all these stories say something about God, who, to be who he eventually became, also had a darker beginning? One of God's earliest names was "*ehyeh 'ăšer 'ehyeh*" (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה) – "I am who may be". If the emphasis is placed on "may be" in the meaning of this name, then one can see God who "may only be" and then only be when is called. These are two different "only": "only" of God before the creation and "only" of God dependent on human needs. Before having been emerged, God was still almighty, not delimited by good and evil, but God of even the most primordial revelations already imposes ethical obligations, is dialectical and puts good before evil.

Because in the desert and darkness of the *chôra* God and Satan appear as one person, Kearney felt the need to separate these persons and to distinguish his position among the "Apostles of the Impossible"<sup>53</sup>. The *chôra* enables such a separation, but as if only in its reflection, because it emits a phenomenal mirror, its own copy, in which the possibilities rooted in *chôra* itself multiply. By mere their multiplication the possibilities go beyond the purely potential state. They cease



to be mere possibilities and become acts. The poorly described problem is the activity of the *chôra* at various stages of her activity, which are violent and turbulent and at the same time not far from each other in terms of time. It is not a coincidence that in its descriptions the notions of boiling, bubbling and overflowing appeared<sup>54</sup>. In his analyses, Kearney referred to those of her actions which take place as if beyond herself, that is, in openness, in phenomena. In this world, God more and more wants to be, and this happens because of people's strong longing. God is the object of longing and only in this form He is. Outside His image, He is only a void, which means that His image hides His absence. In this way, the image becomes an obligation, a Kant's regulatory idea, which is to intensify the sense of responsibility to infinity. But Kearney makes attempts to save God that is ontotheological, but, like in Caputo, weaker in His onticity, God that "may be". The other side of God's manifestation is therefore His hiding in an image which is intended for ethical violence. Non-existence must be forgotten in order for existence to flourish, even if it is only a semblance and an image of non-existence.

In Kearney's writings, the *chôra* and God are distancing themselves from each other. Separation exacerbates doubts as to whether deconstruction can really be a kind of religion and imposes moral obligations comparable to those of traditional religions. Deconstruction assumes full translatability of God's names and their substitutability by names from the field of philosophy or contemporary theology. Infinity or Otherness (in Levinas's philosophy), and furthermore the Impossible or the *chôra* (in Derrida's philosophy) would therefore be rightful names of God, which would solve problems of old cataphatic theologies reducing God to the level of the "highest Being". The limiting of God to the level of intelligibility and accessibility contained known errors which initially were overcome by apophatic theologies up to philosophies of *différance* and the *chôra*. However, Kearney's separate position raises a number of questions. Is there a leap of faith in the case of the *chôra*? Does deconstruction have the right to claim the status of a religion? What exactly becomes the object of worship in it, so "*Quid ergo amo, cum Deum meum amo?*"<sup>55</sup>. The difference between Kearney and Derrida and Caputo can be seen in at least two quotations below.

God and *khora* are conceivably two different names for the same thing – the same nameless, indescribable experience of the abyss. But the choice between names is not insignificant<sup>56</sup>. [...]

The two are as inextricably linked as siamese twins but they beat with different hearts<sup>57</sup>.

Kearney's relative statements do not obscure the divergence of positions and the consequences of this contradiction for the understanding of the Parc de La Villette as a church of Otherness. The term



<sup>54</sup> The Godhead, according to Eckhart, "overboils" to bubble up into God and creation. According to I. Almond (*op. cit.*, s. 158), Eckhart's terms are similar to Heidegger's concepts of "*her-vorkommen*" and "*entziehen*" related to the movements of being and oscillation in these movements.

<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, transl. A. C. Outler, London 1955, Book 10, 7.11, p. 207: "What is it, then, that I love when I love my God?"; Sanctus Aurelius Augustinus, *Confessiones*, ed. L. Verheijen, Turnhout 1981, 10, 7, 11: "*Quid ergo amo, cum Deum meum amo? Quis est ille super caput animae meae? Per ipsam animam meam ascendam at illum. Transibo vim meam, qua haereo corpori et vitaliter compagem eius repleo. Non ea vi reperio Deum meum: nam reperiret et equus et mulus, quibus non est intellectus (Ps 31, 9), et est eadem vis, qua vivunt etiam eorum corpora. Est alia vis, non solum qua vivifico sed etiam qua sensifico carnem meam, quam mihi fabricavit Dominus, iubens oculo, ut non audiat, et auri, ut non videat (Rom. 11,8), sed illi, per quem videam, huic, per quam audiam, et propria singillatim ceteris sensibus sedibus suis et officiis suis: quae diversa per eos ago unus ego animus. Transibo et istam vim meam; nam et hanc habet equus et mulus; sentiunt enim etiam ipsi per corpus*".

<sup>56</sup> R. Kearney *Strangers...*, p. 202; *idem*, *Khora or God, [in:] A Passion for the Impossible* John D. Caputo in Focus, ed. M. Dooley, New York 2003, p. 111. See also J. Manoussakis, *Khora: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation*, "Revista Portuguesa de Filozofia" 2002, no. 1, p. 98.

<sup>57</sup> R. Kearney, *Khora...*, p. 119.

 <sup>58</sup> B. Treanor, *op. cit.*, p. 989.

Otherness was derived from the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and after its radicalisation it became part of the philosophy and theology of the Impossibility. Such an orientation can be found in Derrida, but Derrida's transition to extreme positions was the reason why Kearney had to recognise that the difference between the *chôra* and God should be articulated more strongly. Derrida was aware of this difference when he said that there were two trends within the apophatic philosophies and theologies: one that emphasizes God's unspokenness and separateness from all beings, but leaves no doubt that God understood in this way is still God (even if He is deprived of the attribute of being, as Marion did). He is an expressive, demanding God and, according to Kearney, also a personified one, so He is consistent with traditional religions and beliefs. The *chôra*, being a representation of the second current, which was not seen clearly in Caputo's philosophy, was originally supposed to be "the ineffable, irreducible, atheological no-place of absolute alterity (*tout autre*)"<sup>58</sup>. Within this reasoning, God seems to be secondary to the *chôra*. It should be recognised that Caputo's indulgence towards the *chôra* went too far and it is this indulgence that forced a series of corrections from Kearney's side which were then reinforced in Brian Treanor's commentary to the book *The God Who May Be*.

Treanor pointed out that contemporary philosophies (such as deconstruction of Derrida) and theologies (such as Marion's denomination), which draw in part from old apophatics and mysticism, have led too explicitly to reflection on absence, which results in the fact that no positive ethical program can be created from their purified concepts (in the case of deconstruction), while God, completely devoid of attributes, cannot be the foundation of faith or religion. Treanor's position is richly argued, but it is as logically imperfect as the views he questions.

The logic of consistent conduct in philosophy forced the emergence of the concept of the Impossible as completely impossible. The absolutely impossible, however, does not negate itself, only removes itself from the horizon of human understanding. For logical reasons, many existing concepts (like God, Being, or being) have been declared as metaphysically unfounded. However, the absence of a base is not a ultimate premise for concluding that referents of such concepts do not exist. Acceptance of the possibility of existence grounded in the abyss presupposes cognition of the aforementioned referents and allows avoiding recognition of non-existence as completely unrecognisable. Anything Impossible already at the moment when it is considered completely impossible is given a certain possibility, it passes into a state of potentiality and being. So the Impossible, like *Gottheit* of Eckhart or "God Without Being" of Marion, but also many other similar "Non-Beings" (as for example Infinity of Levinas), turns out to have degrees of its non-existence, none of which is a perfect, absolute non-existence. The Impossible must inevitably pass into the possible

and must therefore undergo gradation and degradation. In fact, the existence of a radical and absolute understanding of the Impossibility and the Otherness is necessary to determine the degrees of descent into the possible.

We should respect the achievements of the philosophy of absence, including the efforts to achieve the fullness of Otherness or the perfection of the Impossibility, but these are above all manifestations of striving to clarify certain concepts that do not achieve their goal. The solutions resulting from hyper-rationalistic positions are not definitive and are overcome by others that sometimes contradict them completely. One may attempt to criticise the whole dialectic system, but anti-metaphysical concepts also lead to the emergence of concepts which, over time, turn out to be a variation of solutions known under other forms. Logic, which is the main tool for convincing, turns out to be a form of rhetoric and only a part of stories whose strength comes from beyond the possibility of rational thinking. All attempts at correctness of thinking ignore impurity and error, which are more “life-giving” than purity and errorlessness (having something of the atmosphere of death). The *chôra* is saturated with error, and what is active in it is the “errant necessity” (*anankê*) and the necessity of error. God too, in order to be life-giving, must move away from His purest form, the *Gottheit*-type, become weak, crippled and, above all, susceptible to death.

Treanor in his commentary referred the reservations, which are induced by the philosophy of absence, not only to contemporary attempts to create God as a pure Otherness or Impossibility, but also to the ability of such philosophies to create a supposed “Religion without Religion” or to create a binding ethical program. He focused his doubts on the Augustinian problem of “*Quid ergo amo, cum Deum meum amo?*” God’s being perfectly different from the possibility of human assimilation deprives Him of His existence not only in the world of His non-existence, but God, understood in this way, ceases to be God in the common sense of the word. It ceases to be and it ceases to command. Of course, one cannot deny that religions have an irremovable tendency to sow terror within and outside the communities they create, or that God appeared only in a questionable way (as a burning bush or Jesus). Nevertheless, these imperfect and restrained manifestations have also proved their positive force, which diminishes the significance of the well-known phenomenon of religious violence. Depriving God of His customary attributes, such as goodness, love or, finally, existence itself (Marion), causes not only that He passes into the sphere of concepts that are of interest only to intellectual elites, but also separates Him from tradition and creates a program gap that is difficult to fill. But the emptiness after God is saturated with the necessity to fill it, thus it turns out to be a space of revelation of pure necessity (*anankê*).





<sup>59</sup> P. Dybel, "Panie Heidegger, kiedy pan napisze etykę?". Egzystencjalna relatywizacja fenomenu sumienia i winy w "Sein und Zeit" Martina Heideggera, [in:] *Martin Heidegger dzisiaj*, ed. P. Marciszuk, C. Wodziński, "Aletheia" 1990, no. 1, vol. 2, p. 326.

## 5. Ethics of the new religion and the space of its worship

To not be put in the situation in which Heidegger found himself when asked when he would draw from his philosophy an ethical program<sup>59</sup>, Derrida presented a long series of statements on moral issues. Efforts to build a "Religion without Religion" are based on the identical principle of limiting the Impossible, on which were created ethical programs of the Christian religion limiting the Divinity (*Gotttheit*) to the "Good News" proclaimed by Jesus and then reduced to a series of orders and prohibitions by St. Paul. Building ethics on the basis of pure concepts alone is impossible in the common sense of the word, but any other ethics is essentially solving current "impure" political problems and adapting the tasks of religion to them. It is only relative Otherness and partial Impossibility that can form the basis for the elevation or worship of certain moral behaviours. Therefore, if the Parc de La Villette is a temple of Otherness, it is only by combining its internal content with the writings of those "theologians" who have developed ethical and political programs. At the beginning of the philosophy of deconstruction, a contradiction between the main concepts of the new faith (centered around Otherness or Impossibility) and the ethical imperatives implied by the current political reality was clearly visible. It is therefore understandable Derrida's and Caputo's carefulness to bridge the gap between the proposed philosophy and the practical demands. Therefore, if a certain "holiness" is celebrated in the Parc de La Villette, it is "holiness", which is "im-pure", it is a necessity to err in solving problems with visible horizons. The Parc de La Villette cultivates a dirty holiness that does not turn its eyes away from persecution, humiliation, suffering, blood and death of human and not of God.

Kearney's position on the problem of similarities and differences between the *chôra* and God, presented above, brings many useful consequences, but it is not sufficient. After being formulated and disseminated, it seems to move aside, giving place to another one, which is similar to a movement of the *chôra* that can be characterized as a withdrawal. This movement does not resemble Hegel's scheme of overcoming and moving forward, but rather a palintropical return to the place of greatest resistance. It can be compared to the movement of a wave retreating after a swell, but any similar analogy being forced by this place of resistance does not achieve a satisfactory goal. One can get the impression that the *chôra* is not active by itself but is constantly influenced by "errant necessity". The "sieving" movements of the *chôra* described by Plato are infinite, as if the grain of semiotic, passing into symbolic, degraded and disappeared.

Kearney, like many other philosophers and theologians, welcomed with interest Derrida's opinions about the *chôra* as an inspiration to put in order and deepen apophatics, especially Christian negative theology and mysticism. It should be recalled once again that when examining the issue of the *chôra* in Plato, Derrida noticed that even in this

philosopher and then also in the Christian continuators there were two mutually exclusive approaches to the issue of the origin of the world, of Being, or of God. The first view is that there is a higher significance than God revealed, and for this reason it can be described as hyper-essentialist. This position is impassable for all Christian tradition, including Marion establishing “God without Being”. The second position is unacceptable within the Christian tradition, since it consists in recognizing the functioning of the *chôra* as being essentially empty, radically negative towards any form of existence. While Caputo leaned toward the recognition of the *chôra*’s priority before God, Kearney endeavored to show that the *chôra*’s priority was in some way dependent upon God, his inferior state, nevertheless possible thanks to God. It is not until God who creates the nothingness that precedes him.

For Derrida, the *chôra* was to be impossible to be covered by theology, The *chôra* was supposed to remain unlike anything that could be imagined by human, deeply inhuman and atheological, alien to revelation and all truth, but by theologians, in this case by Kearney, it was found as a darker and more monstrous side of God. Manoussakis commenting on Kearney’s views stated that all attempts to distinguish between God and the *chôra* lead only to revealing further similarities<sup>60</sup>. Trying to sum up this stage of the discussion, he also pointed out that we can notice two traditions in it: the “Greek” one that establishes God as transcendent, exceeding what is created, therefore hyper-real and ecstatic; and the “Jewish” one that understands God as a hidden immanence, God hiding Himself in creation (for example in the form of a substance according to Spinoza), and thus God who is immanent and hypostatic. Such a separation (in Manoussakis terms called hyphenation) requires another transgression, another attempt at *via tertia*. The proposed third way, according to Manoussakis, announces “a sojourn neither to Jerusalem, nor to Athens, but, perhaps, to Chalcedon”<sup>61</sup>.

## 6. Byzantine *chôra* and art and architecture

Chalcedon, proposed by Manoussakis as a symbol of Byzantine theology and an encounter between Plato’s metaphysics and Christian theology, seems to be the capital city also for Nicoletta Isar’s research combining knowledge of Byzantine thought with art history. In numerous articles, Isar proved that the concept of *chôra* was, long before Caputo or Kearney became interested in it, used to describe the nature of Jesus and established it as a matrix of the Incarnation. In addition, it played an important role in formulating the concept of works of art as *chôric* containers for sacred content, which was applied to the theory of icon and church space. The author’s reflections in some elements complemented the ancient Byzantine theology and introduced new proposals, which, although of contemporary origin, could usefully be used to describe the art of the times of the Eastern Roman Empire.



<sup>60</sup> J. Manoussakis, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 98.



<sup>62</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Epistle 101* (= ep. 1 ad Cledonium presbyterum contra Apollinarum), *Opera quae exstant omnia. Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca* (= *Patrologia Graeca*) 37, ed. J. P. Migne, Paris 1837, col. 177B; as cit. in: N. Isar, *Chôra: Tracing the Presence*, "Review of European Studies" 2009, no. 1, p. 42.

<sup>63</sup> The same expression was used by Derrida, see J. Derrida, *Ousia and Grammē: Note on a Note from „Being and Time”*, [in:] *idem*, *Margins of Philosophy*, transl. A. Bass, Brighton 1982, p. 69.

<sup>64</sup> J. Manoussakis, *op. cit.*, pp. 99–100; see also P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami: Studies in the Art of the Kariye Djami and Its Intellectual Background*, New York 1966 [Vol. I *Historical Introduction and Description of the Mosaics and Frescoes*; Vol. II *The Mosaics*].

In-depth studies of ancient culture show that the concept of *chôra* was used not only theologically, but also to describe artistic phenomena in a way that could further justify the interpretations of the Park de La Villette carried out here.

In the 4th century, Gregory of Nazianzus described God incarnate in a particularly striking way as a *chôrêton kai achôrêton*<sup>62</sup>, an oxymoron that can be translated as “that which occupies space, and does not occupy space”<sup>63</sup>. Defining the Incarnation as space, and at the same time undermining it by introducing uncertainty about such a definition is similar to Derrida’s philosophizing methods. Moreover, the elevation of spatiality to the rank of a basic concept for understanding and describing all manifestations of what can be later called Being turns out to be not so much Derrida’s original achievement as a permanent topos of philosophy, theology and culture. All philosophers arguing with Plato are therefore struggling with the same problem of the *chôra* posed in *Timaeus*. Describing, inscribing, defining or limiting God in an indescribable but also non-spatial *chôra* is then a matrix for thinking about how God reveals in phenomena such as the body or the icon. God first outlines Himself in the space of the *chôra* to limit Himself in the Word, to present Himself in the Incarnation and to show Himself in the icon. The sounds of the *chôra* become the world’s speech, the Logos, God and the image of this in speech and works of art. However, such ordering of phenomena blurs the vital chaos of the *chôra*, its state, from the description of which all philosophies evade. Any spatialisation (*espacement*, *différance*) is the suppression, organization and humiliation of the uncanny nature of the *chôra*. Perhaps we should soon consider another “third way” beyond Athens, Jerusalem and Chalcedon, the way that would lead into the desert to the oasis of Taymat, which in this considerations appears vaguely in the distance. For now, however, it is worthwhile to follow the *chôra* in the Byzantine Empire.

An example of using the theology of the *chôra* in the spirit of Gregory of Nazianzus are the mosaics on the right and left side of the apse of St. Saviour’s Church in Chora (*sic!*), a place once located outside the walls of Constantinople and now within the borders of Istanbul (“ἡ Ἐκκλησία του Ἁγίου Σωτῆρος ἐν τῇ Χώρα”) <sup>64</sup>. Both mosaics, one of each depicting Mary and the other Jesus, contain inscriptions that refer to these characters and describe them as “ἡ Χώρα”. The first says “ἡ Χώρα τοῦ ἀχωρήτου” (“*He Khora tou Akhoretou*”) and can be regarded as considering the role of Mary as an instrument of Incarnation, while the second describes Christ as “ἡ Χώρα τὸν ζώντων” (“*He Khora ton Zonton*”) and can be referred to the mystery of the hypostatic union. In the case of the first mosaic, we can talk about the use of the motif of a container (*ecmageion*) characterizing also the *chôra*, so that Mary can be interpreted as the womb of the Word incarnated. The second mosaic refers to Christ’s functioning as a space (*chôra*) in which God’s being becomes a phenomenon, in other words, the Word becomes flesh (without mixing the incompatible natures of each of them).

The reflections on the diversity of phenomena occurring in the *chôra*, and especially on enabling a higher level of being to pass into a visible phenomenon, were an important component of the discussion on the “ability of the icon to contain the presence of God” that took place in the 9th century<sup>65</sup>. Numerous arguments confirm Isar’s thesis that the issues of God’s presence in the artistic image are derivative of the more general problem of the difference (*différance*) causing all existence in the form of traces (or reflections) rather than in any full form. The imperfect, postponed presence of anything, almost the absence of presence, is a constant motif of the philosophy of deconstruction, but also a recurring (palintropical) question of philosophy at least since Plato’s times. The arguments of the iconodules for the extra-phenomenal functioning of God in images may be considered an aspect of the same issue, but their victory over the position of iconoclasts is not logically perfect. The recognition that an icon, although it does not represent an image of the essence of God (*ousia*), is not merely an artistic image, but an image in which God “inscribes” His presence has contributed to the acceptance of images in the world of religion, but must raise doubts even among theologians. The thought of God’s embodiment in the phenomena of the material world did not defend itself in Western theology and remained a part of doctrine mainly among the Eastern Churches.

Isar recalled the role played by St. Nicefor (c. 758–829), Patriarch of Constantinople during the reign of his namesake Emperor Nicefor I (802–811), and after also of Michael I (811–813) and Leon V Armenian (813–820) in the dispute over images until 814, when he was removed from the post of patriarch and completely deprived of power in 815<sup>66</sup>.

In Antirrheticus II, two concepts are defined and clarified: inscription (*graphê*) and circumscription (*perigraphê*). Nichephoros defines circumscription in connection with the Aristotelian *topos*, as a limitation of the body that it contains. Christ, taking on a body, is circumscribed in space (*topos*), but by virtue of His divine nature, He is outlined in an uncircumscribed space, abstract and infinite, in *chôra*. The icon generated by the iconic inscription (*graphê*) has its specific space, which reveals the *chôra* and not the *tópos* [...]. The iconic inscription (*graphê*) is a trace that defines a space that is and is not there (*achôrêton*)<sup>67</sup>.

The above quotation directly confirms the understanding of the difference between the *tópos* and the *chôra* among Byzantine theologians and the attribution to the latter the function of spatialisation of the divine. It also indicates that Nicefor’s understanding of the *chôra* took into account its uncanny nature, including its limitlessness and lack of the nature of being. If we recall that in the theology of the Eastern Empire there were also other motifs characteristic of the understanding of the *chôra*, such as the motif of its activity as a container and producer of Being, it must be assumed that the philosophy of the



<sup>65</sup> N. Isar, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>66</sup> See *ibidem*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

*chôra* faithfully accompanied the whole culture of the Western and Eastern worlds and was already many times helpful in awakening understanding of the hierarchy of beings.

## **7. The *chôra* as the mirror of the being of the idea and the model of the work of art**

Present-day reflections on the *chôra* usually unknowingly repeat many of the interpretations that have occurred before, including those that are now presented as radical and revealing. The philosophy of the *chôra* was also applied to the description of the functioning of the work of art and its ability to create visions that were particularly adequate to depict the secondary nature of what wished to be considered a real being, even though it contained imperfections and did not fulfill the conditions of being complete. Works of art may therefore refer to the *chôra*'s basic task, which is the mere appearance of being or the transition from an alleged higher being to a lower one. Such a phenomenon is dramatic, because the division of full and perfect being contains a certain impossibility. A higher kind of being cannot lose anything of its perfection, so every other being can be only its reflection. Along with this observation, another important motif in the understanding of the *chôra*'s activity appears, namely the motif of a mirror, which has been inherited by the tradition of the way of existence of a work of art. The *chôra* in this configuration would be a tool for appearing of the perfect being in the space of reflections. The perfect being, which, like the shadows on the cave wall, would like to be considered a real being. Art would reflect then these shadows, but through reflection on its nature it would also draw attention to the principle of manifestation of being of a lower rank and the reasons why it aspires to existence as the only and real being. The search for traces of the presence of complete being in the phenomenal world becomes possible due to the assumption that the *chôra* is a kind of mirror for the source being. Although this mode of thinking permeates the entire philosophical tradition of the Western world, it also evokes a tendency to take the view that there is no being of any kind other than this, allegedly only secondary one. Thinking about two kinds of beings is, however, necessary for thinking at all. Such thinking is created by the *chôra* itself (or by *différance*) which makes any division possible, but equally inevitable are attempts to escape from the world of dialectical and binary divisions, which, after all, is also the merit of the *chôra* as a third kind of being.

The *chôra*, functioning as a mirror for being of ideas, emits their images into the phenomenal world. Any appearance of being of ideas brings the characteristics of intelligibility and the belief that what is manifest is true. However, the appearance of being is the transformation of true being into an illusion. Appearing is a transition to a state whose task is to hide the fact of being an illusion. The obviousness



of phenomenal being is supposed to mislead and evoke a conviction, perhaps not entirely false, that phenomenal being is the only being available to human and the only real being. Therefore, one should pay more attention to the illusions that are created in the space of a work of art. It seems that in certain conditions these illusions become not so much a reflection of the perfect world existing originally, or of the real world, but rather of the world of the future. In certain conditions, works of art can function as a prophecy of the future, which was the main purpose of the basic replica of the *chôra*, i.e. the liver. The Parc de La Villette can be interpreted as a special case of a hepatic choir plunging its public into a dream of a future that is perhaps a always sought-after perfect being, although in this case perfect because of its non-existence. Usually perfection has appeared as being immersed in the world of the past and could be supposed to exist, in the case of Park de La Villette the desired perfection is opposite to any perfection and is in the future and non-existence.



<sup>68</sup> The adjective “hepatic” used in the subtitle, is of Latin origin but has its source in the Greek word *ἥπατικός* and is a derivative of *ἥπαρ*.

<sup>69</sup> J. Sallis, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 135; N. Isar, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45.

## 8. A hepatic park<sup>68</sup>, the liver of the city

The Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*, reporting on the creation of the world and human, suggests that the structure of all created things contains analogies to the principles contained in the causes of creation: ideas, the Demiurge and the *chôra*. Sallis in *Chorology* showed that in Plato’s opinion the *chôra* was repeated in the liver (*ἥπαρ*), thus in the organ, which was attributed a key role in the human body<sup>69</sup>. In Plato’s descriptions (*Timaeus*, 71b-c) the liver is smooth and shiny (*lamparos*) and functions as a space capable of reflecting thoughts appearing in the soul (*nous*) and transforming them into images giving the imaginability to what is not phenomenal. The imaginability is the result of the action of imagination, but only secondarily it becomes a visible image. The transformation of this kind takes place with the participation of movement, which is a sound that also gives audibility to the imagining. Sound is speech that uses the emergence of images, so that imaginings can spatialise themselves in visible or audible images. The mirror of the liver reflects thoughts coming either from the soul of the world or from the highest part of the human soul, arousing desires and passions that drive human behaviour. However, the images on the liver are merely visions, unclear dream apparitions, which, although they give a share in the truth, require further changes in the nature of interpretation. They cannot be in direct contact with the source of their origin because they are of a lower rank and are subject to being revealed that weakens their original strength. Their appearance is blurred by the character of dream, prophecy or apparition. People err leading themselves by recognizing the truth contained in the vision created at the level of their livers. Vision has a serious share in the truth, but its recognition (interpretation) does not have such a large



<sup>70</sup> N. Isar, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>71</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 46.

<sup>72</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 47.

share. Greater access to the truth contained in the reflection on the liver is exclusive, reserved for a few individuals, including artists. Communities may lead themselves by important images appearing on the liver of the city. The Parc de La Villette is such an image.

In case of the need to obtain knowledge about the future, communities use diviners (*manteis*), who, especially in states of ecstasy or even madness, delirium and loss of their identity, being “beyond themselves” (*ecstatikoi*), but being in the “fullness of God” (*enthoi*) have access to divine messages (*Timaeus*, 71e)<sup>70</sup>. The recipients of higher inspirations are also fortune-tellers reading from the liver of sacrificial animals, such as the diviner (*haruspex*) Chalcas mentioned in the *Iliad*, or poets and artists<sup>71</sup>. All explanations of this inspiring power inherent in some works of art, which were created in antiquity, were repeated with different words in later epochs of culture. According to Nicoletta Isar, the descriptions of the conduct of avant-garde poets given by Julia Kristeva in her *Revolution in Poetic Language* resemble the conduct of seer in their acts of divination<sup>72</sup>. However, it is necessary to separate individual works of art from most artistic production (as Heidegger did before Kristeva) and to point out the rare cases of some artists being separated from the state of equilibrium and “dwelling” in a certain split between the representation of presence and absence. In Kristeva’s language, this would place their activities between semiotic and symbolic. The Parc de La Villette and Bernard Tschumi meet these conditions.

With great awareness, Tschumi perceived himself as an artist revolutionizing space and separating himself from the fossilized political community, and placing himself in a kind of vibration that could bring regeneration of a deeper balance. His attitude was intended to make him capable of seeking the Impossibility and making it visible, rather than meeting the common requirements of potential users of the Parc de La Villette. In the park, the image of the Impossibility gained space for the manifestation of a certain abyss power enabling the regeneration of spiritual forces of people haunting the park, who, confronted with elements of the uncanny character of the park’s structure, are forced to leave some of their mental habits and return to unclear sources of life force. Parks have often served similar psychosomatic treatments, but in this case, it is done not by mitigating but rather by irritating within well-established intellectual habits. The chaos used in the park sounds unfamiliar and encourages to recognize it and then overcome, so to something impossible, which announces the Impossible in a purer form.

The park is a kind of dream, apparition, vision, divination or phantasm, which, like the *chôra*, shakes the disorder to create a transitory, ephemeral image of order. It is a kind of theatre, where the metaphysical drama of the passage of a desired presence (God or complete Being) into its unsuccessful copies is played out, situating its spatially engaged participants primarily in the space of the passage

between the sought and the found. A space of this kind is much more disturbing than a space where people or communities rely on petrified copies of supposedly perfect beings. Traditional copies of the alleged higher-rank being have been replaced in the park by emptiness. If the park can also be interpreted as a temple, then what is being celebrated there is not so much a perfect being but a passage from its non-existence to the awareness of its non-existence, without grounding the space of this temple on the ordinary illusion of the existence of the foundation of phenomenal being. The park therefore preserves absence rather than presence. The question remains: what does make the vision last?

In the case of the Parc de La Villette we should talk rather about a kind of veil than an ordinary mirror, thus more about a spatial filter which, being identical to the artist's psyche (*ψυχή*) (or perhaps their liver), resembles the *chôra*. Remembering in its nature is not a simple image, a reflection, but a transformation of saturated nothingness into its imagination, a game that requires constant inventiveness (initiation) and sustaining the world of the appearance. This is the reason why the Parc de La Villette must be referred to as a fantasy or dream of the Impossible. It is not endowed with a different kind of reality than any other record of the illusion of existence of being, Being and their forms of a higher rank. If we take advantage of Isar's suggestion of the proximity of the concepts of *chôra*, choir and dance, we can say that the Parc de La Villette is a kind of platform for dance circling around the unattainable. Therefore, it would be a present-day place of the liturgy of reasoning that reaches beyond its limitations more radically than it used to be.

## 9. Excursus

When studying the Parc de La Villette, which in its structural, initial concept was empty, desert-like and definitely distant from a forest overgrown with vegetation, one should notice the distance between it and all primevality. The same applies to the concepts used to describe the park, especially to such a concept as *chôra*. In the past, all of them were based on observations of nature (e.g. movement of waves), agricultural activities and giving birth to life by women. All "is" came into the language later than the birth itself, which is life-giving and precedes all expressions. The extinction of the female gender in speech and culture will never be perfect, because it is constantly reborn, however sometimes forced or hidden. Isn't then the *chôra* above all a woman, suppressed and murdered? Plato equated her with a womb, mother or midwife. Traces of this origin of the *chôra* have remained in the ancient cultures. In our letter discussion on the text of this discourse Tomasz Bauer presented the following view:



Philosophers or theologians when trying to explain and describe the *chôra* make an unconscious mistake. Namely, they create a system which, even when it is based on a deep tradition, disregards the tradition that is more abyss one. They focus on their own beginnings, ignoring what was before the beginning of all explanations. They forget that their tradition was formed on the ruins of much older beliefs, of which only traces have survived. The *chôra* therefore belongs neither to philosophy, nor to theology, nor to the Greeks, nor to the Jews. Nor is it a journey to Chalcedon, that is, an attempt to combine Greek philosophy with Jewish religion. It originates rather from the much more archaic ideas of *Chaos* of the Pelasgians and *Tiamat* of Sumer, and just as theology was created in opposition to the Greek politicalistic tradition, so philosophy and even classical mythology were created in opposition to the images of the most primordial forces from the earlier thought systems. I also believe that when interpreting any traces of the *chôra* in classical texts, one should remember that these texts interpret it by putting themselves in opposition to it, and even diabolising it and trying to present themselves as a logical order against the dark forces of chaos, a male civilisation against uncontrolled female forces. The approach to the *chôra* is therefore fundamentally negative, and only the awareness of its indelible manifestation and the persistence of previous views forced them to include it in the new system.

In Plato we can see how this was done at the stage of philosophy. By studying the history of Babylonian beliefs, one can see similar actions in mythology, where anthropomorphic, and therefore newer deities arranged in a royal court, fought against the female power of Tiamat depicted as the forces of chaos and desert (Fig. 1), against the pressure of which the civilization of the city fought. These are the old traces of the transition from the nomadic to the settled era and the emergence of a political need to create a philosophy that contrasts the uncontrollable forces of nature with an ordered system of state, a system created by people in opposition to nature. However, sometimes the ancient forces remained in consciousness and were even capable of forcing one to turn back, as the last ruler of Babylon Nabonidus (*Nabû-nâ'id*) did, who temporarily relinquished the throne and moved into the desert to the Tayma oasis (Taima, Tema), where a shrine of Tiamat was located.

Classical mythology, Greek philosophy and monotheistic Semitic religions rest on the abyss, which is *Chaos* (*Χάος*) or *Tiamat* and this abyss cannot be explained without going beyond these systems. The starting point could be Babylonian-Sumerian mythology, where the transition phase can be seen, or a part of Greek mythology describing primordial forces. Their actions can be seen in the era of Gaia and Uranus, and perhaps even in the times of the fight of the Giants who tried to restore the old order and take revenge for their mother's harm. There is no justification for efforts to attribute the power of birth to Zeus and make him a life-giver of Athena. Athena belongs to the much older Berber mythology and was the daughter of Poseidon, who was a Berber and not a Greek god of the sea, and going even deeper: she was born by the primeval sea. Giving Zeus the power to give birth is a too obvious plot. It is also wrong to equate God with the *chôra*. God is much younger than the *chôra* and has no power to give birth. He only has the power to create.

The incomparability of the *chôra* and God is revealed in the presentation of the Virgin Mary as by no means the *chôra*, but only a receiver of the divine seed. The primordial *chôra* did not need any semen, she was virginal in much purer form because she was the first, she was the womb and the mother of the world. She gave birth from the mud like Gaia, she gave place for emergence, she was a place of emergence, a place for the emergence and play of forces, for the emergence of effects and effects of their effects. She was That What Is, the oldest deity-place, giving infinite possibilities for shelter to wanderers. The younger god, Demiurge, is already a human product, a product of the idea of construction and arrangement. Construction of the City independent of the *chôra*, and separated from its rest by walls. The *chôra* cannot be built because it is impossible to build a place on which we build. To understand her, we need to go further. Not to Jerusalem and not to Athens, not even to Babylon, but to the pre-Babylonian Sumer, or preferably to Tayma. And then even further back.

Bauer's invitation to renew the understanding of Tiamat is subject to the same attempt to escape from the disorder he criticizes. The groundlessness and chaos disappear and the historical narrative, explainability and sequence of phenomena appear. The *chôra* as the most originary should not, however, be deprived of the components of disorganization manifested in not appearing, disclosing or multiplying opportunities without order. After all, Tiamat evades being recognized even within mythology. If, at the end, we compare the Parc de La Villette with the Tayma oasis, it should be stressed that, like the mythical Śambhala, the park should not have a findable place. After all, if the *chôra* does not have a place, the Parc de La Villette is also atypical.

---

#### Słowa kluczowe

projekt parku de La Villette, architektura i teoria Bernarda Tschumiego, filozofia *chôry*, teologia apofatyczna, postsekularyzm, Inność, *tout autre*, Niemożliwe, Mistrz Eckhart, John David Caputo, Richard Kearney, Jean-Luc Marion, John Panteleimon Manoussakis, Nicoletta Isar

---

#### Keywords

project of the Parc de La Villette, architecture and theory of Bernard Tschumi, concept of *chôra*, apophatic theology, postsecularism, Otherness, *tout autre*, Impossible, Master Eckhart, John David Caputo, Richard Kearney, Jean-Luc Marion, John Panteleimon Manoussakis, Nicoletta Isar

---

#### References

1. **Almond Ian**, *Negative Theology, Derrida and the Critique of Presence: a Post-structuralist Reading of Meister Eckhart*, "The Heythrop Journal. A Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Theology" 1999, no. 40.
2. **Caputo John David**, *Apostles of the Impossible: On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion*, [in:] *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, ed. J. D. Caputo, M. J. Scanlon, Bloomington 1999.





3. **Derrida Jacques**, *Of an Apocalyptic Tone Newly Adopted in Philosophy*, [in:] *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. H. Coward, T. Foshay, New York 1992.
4. **Derrida Jacques**, *Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone* [in French: 1996], transl. S. Weber, [in:] *Acts of Religion*, ed. G. Anidjar, New York – London 2002.
5. **Edwards Ian**, *Derrida's (Ir)religion: A Theology (of Différance)*, "Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and Arts" 2003, no. 1.
6. **Isar Nicoletta**, *Chôra: Tracing the Presence*, "Review of European Studies" 2009, no. 1.
7. **Kearney Richard**, *The God Who May Be. A Hermeneutics of Religion*, Bloomington 2001.
8. **Kearney Richard**, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, London – New York 2002.
9. **Manoussakis John**, *Khora: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation*, "Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia" 2002, no.1.
10. **Treanor Brian**, *The God Who May Be: Quis ergo amo cum deum meum amo?*, "Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia" 2004, no. 4.

---

**Dr. habil. Cezary Was**, [waseczar@gmail.com](mailto:waseczar@gmail.com)

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław. Curator of the Museum of Architecture. Author of the books: *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej* (Antinomies of the Contemporary Sacred Architecture, 2008), *Architektura a dekonstrukcja. Przypadek Petera Eisenmana i Bernarda Tschumiego* (Architecture and Deconstruction. The case of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi, 2015) and dozens of articles on phenomena of the ancient and modern culture.

#### Summary

**CEZARY WAS (University of Wrocław) / The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher. The Parc de La Villette in Paris in the context of philosophy of chôra. Part IV: Other Church / Church of Otherness**

In the texts that presented the theoretical assumptions of the Parc de La Villette, Bernard Tschumi used a large number of terms that contradicted not only the traditional principles of composing architecture, but also negated the rules of social order and the foundations of Western metaphysics. Tschumi's statements, which are a continuation of his leftist political fascinations from the May 1968 revolution, as well as his interest in the philosophy of French poststructuralism and his collaboration with Jacques Derrida, prove that terms such as disruption, dissociation, disfunction, disjunctions and dispersion not only referred to architectural problems but also applied to political criticism and the deepest foundations of thinking itself. His collaboration with Derrida manifested itself primarily in the publication *La Case Vide: La Villette*, 1985, in which the architect's design drawings and texts explaining his concepts related to the Park de La Villette were accompanied by an extensive essay by Derrida, which included theoretical problems taken up by Tschumi in a philosophical context. Architectural and philosophical issues were

also combined during seven discussion meetings organised by Peter Eisenman, invited by Tschumi to collaborate on the design of the Parc de La Villette. Eisenman, who, like Tschumi, invited Derrida to participate in the design of the park and also led to the publication of *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, in which his ideas were confronted with Derrida's philosophical text. In this case, Derrida's essay was not a direct commentary on the architect's concepts, but rather a reflection on the question of the *chôra* presented by Plato in *Timaeus*. During the discussion and in his essay, Derrida pointed out that the *chôra* is a component of the created world, yet it does not belong to it, but precedes it. The originality of the *chôra* is so radical that she also precedes all the factors of creating the world, including ideas and the Demiurge. Thus a thesis appeared in the metaphysics of the West that the *chôra* is a form of active abyss, in relation to which all beings are secondary, both those perfect (as ideas or God) and those created, such as the world, things, people or language. This leads to the conclusion that the *chôra* does not exist, because all existence is a derivative of the *chôra*. Nor could the *chôra* be described, since it is a form of developing a space that is preceded by a lack of space characteristic of the *chôra*.

Derrida intended the *chôra* to be an instance with an exceptional degree of transcendentalism, an anti-metaphysical instance, but also an a-theological one. However, this attempt failed, both in the field of secular philosophy and in the field of theology. Derrida's characteristics of the *chôra* to strengthen its transcendentalism and negation of metaphysics had to be expressed in a language that immediately produces new concepts and a new metaphysics that reproduces the categories of the beginning, the origin or the foundation known from earlier philosophical traditions. All forms of criticism of metaphysics are also inspired by negative, apophatic and mystical theology. The undermining of many concepts of permanent meaning and the introduction of new concepts of unstable meaning, characteristic of the philosophy of deconstruction, had many features of originality, but it was directed towards problems whose solutions repeat, with the use of new vocabulary, the findings known in culture since Democritus. Thus, if apophatic philosophy can be regarded as deconstruction *avant la lettre*, then deconstruction itself in its late versions began to take on the features of a new religion.

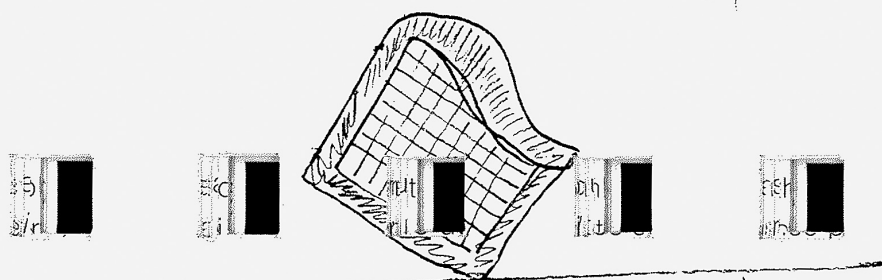
The exchange of inspiration between theology and deconstruction was manifested in a series of scientific conferences and publications in which Derrida's philosophical concepts were interpreted within the scope of religious thought. Theological threads began to be found in such concepts of deconstruction as *différance* or the *chôra*, while at the same time Derrida himself undertook in his philosophy to study problems such as the Other (*L'Autre*) or Impossible (*Impossible*), which belonged to newer theological traditions. As a consequence of the new problems, the deconstruction became closer to the features of a new religion. Philosophy, at least from Kant's time, has tried to create a system that would take over from religion the tasks of setting moral and political goals. Similarly, Derrida has directed his interest towards the problems of democracy and ethics, which would enable their renewal. Attempts to create a new religion (cleared of old metaphors), a new community or a new democracy bring problems and threats which may be no less troublesome than the previous systems. All promises of freedom carry with them threats, the greater the more they strive for perfection. The renewal of existential orders, sometimes carried out by means of violent changes, is a certain repetitive feature of human cultures. Deep changes, however, do not protect against the return of both old gods and old demons.

Tschumi and Derrida were shaped in their youth by the atmosphere of leftist rebellion against the moral and political limitations of ossified communities and the imperfections of democracy. The ethical theme distinguishes many of their works, including the Parc de La Villette. The opposition to the metaphysical traditions of philosophy and architecture contained in this park was prompted by specific political situations and resulted from bringing political issues to the level of philosophical considerations. Achievements made at the level of pure concepts were then subject to elevation, to a kind of sacralization, which made them religious concepts. The deconstruction reached for the stratus of the new religion especially when it found its followers and began to generate moral obligations. In the new situation, terms such as the *chôra*, *l'autre* or the Impossible were absolutized and in relation to them a cult and attitude of adoration emerged. The Parc de La Villtette then gained new post-secular meanings, which allow it to be assigned the function of a Temple of Otherness (*L'Autre*) and Impossible.



YALE UNIVERSITY  
NEW HAVEN · CONNECTICUT · 06520  
DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE  
1113 BINGHAM HALL

tu es de l'essence de la forme à un team, à  
un cube ou une grille (GRID) et  
un instrument de musique à corde (CHORD).  
(piano, harpe, lyre?)



En tant que grille, grid, etc. il aurait un  
certain rapport avec la forme interprétée et  
sélectionnée par les points de vue et de cube  
les 3 axes et les 3 cordes (PDE, RT, LV) etc.  
En tant que sculpture, il aurait une forme  
simplifiée de chœur.

Interprétation de cette forme pour rien ne devant être  
inscrite sur cette sculpture, à moins que, peut-être,  
elle le soit et une sculpture n'est finalement qu'une  
part (choral work, by ... - 1986 ...) - A distance,  
entre autres choses.

J. Derrida, sculpture design for the Parc de La Villette presenting chœur, Letter to Peter Eisenman of 30 V 1986.  
After: Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman, ed. J. Kipnis, T. Leiser, New York 1997, p. 183

# The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher

## The Parc de La Villette in Paris in the Context of Philosophy of *Chôra*

### Part V

Cezary Wąs

University of Wrocław

#### Conclusion

From its very beginning, Western philosophical thought has been considering the issue of relations between the content of our consciousness and the deeper principles of the external world. The division into a conscious interior and an objective exterior was questioned on the basis of many valuable arguments, which, however, were not convincing enough to prevent the problem from returning. The question of the relationship between the results of thinking and objects of reflection leads to the question of the status of objects created as a record of transcendent or logical beings. Achieving an adequacy between the content of recording and ideal beings created many difficulties, which led to the view that philosophical or artistic representations of the discussed relations are above all stories considered true when they have outstanding rhetorical values and power of persuasion. It can be assumed that they are true, because they are beautiful and influential. Their functioning depends on the activity of their advocates who use such narratives to build individual or collective identity. Uncertain or unclear knowledge contained in them may become useful when treated as a formula of faith. In this transition from an accurate observation to promoting it as an indisputable truth, the decisive role is played by activating self-imposed coercion or institutionalised violence against a community.

An additional problem is the issue of the relationship between the theories functioning in an environment where a specific work of art was produced and an object realised there. In Erwin Panofsky's iconology, an attempt was made to show that the ideas accompanying a work of art are essentially identical to its internal contents. Even when such an identification was questioned, pointing out that works of art interpreted the content they were inspired by rather than being its simple representation, or that they

created their own messages independent of their official subject, the involvement of the work in intellectual matters continued to be of interest. This study goes further in its attempt to argue that a work of art can create a philosophy that can only be extracted and verbalized from it secondarily.

The Parc de La Villette has been interpreted in the above reflections as a place for the emergence of the invention which requires the establishment of its beginning in order to exist. It was usually not acknowledged that such a beginning could only be invented, but it was much more eagerly recognised as a reality and an expression of the will of transcendent being. However, the rejection of the location of the beginning in the divine being, characteristic of modern thinking, also does not give completely satisfactory results. Although no empirical data can confirm Him and the images of cosmologists have gone in a different direction, God comes to human mind, even though He appears there in new ways requiring a new nomenclature. The divinity of the beginning as the source of all things returns in the theses claiming that the lack of the beginning is also the source, although the source that shows the features which are spoken of in negative or apophatic theologies. The deepened lack of beginning is a nothingness that surprises with the complexity of its structure and the forces it contains. Basing the beginning on nothingness has consequences for political, artistic and moral concepts. These are not consequences that abolish all hitherto existing ones, but open petrified orders to new possibilities. The rejection of the transcendent God as a determinant of moral behaviour does not lead to social catastrophe and very often contributes to His reconstruction in the sense of an individual's moral duty, whose strength is able to introduce a categorical order into the behaviour of the individual and to induce them to force the environment to comply with the norms previously proposed by religious systems. According to Georg Hegel, the annihilated transcendent God is reborn in a pure intellect, and this view is a guideline for reflection on other places where the forces of the beginning are manifested. If it is necessary for them to be linked to a specific location, it can be shown that also the Parc de La Villette, thanks to its specific characteristics, is an area where a new community and its ethics begin.

God does not need to be connected with the concept of goodness, but can be treated as a morally indifferent force. The problem is that the disclosure of such force is assessed from the benefit position of the observer. Spatialisations of the source force are then hierarchized according to the good they contain. God, who is revealed, even as the *chôra* or nothingness, in order to become desired or necessary, must be an instrument of justice. It is difficult to say whether it is the forces of absolute emptiness that adapt to human needs or whether only those aspects that can be useful are drawn from that emptiness, nevertheless, in the band of necessity, those threads are separated, which can be described as good and righteous. The functioning of the *chôra* makes it more possible to be described, than the *chôra* itself in her essential qualities. The *chôra* may remain unspeakable, but its manifestations are also contained in the compulsion to speak. Matters about which nothing certain can be said, and about which nothing certain has ever been said, are particularly tempting to talk about and often talk about in the tone of revealing the ultimate truth. Every serious effort of thought based on the negation of what in that thought is existing and traditional undergoes various stages of revolutionality, but invariably ends with a phase of apocalyptic prophecies, messianisms, an ardent sense of reaching the goal and discovering a new justice. Logically speaking, the deepest skepticism must finally question itself and atheism must acknowledge the dominance of something that can only be believed and cannot be proven.

The history and analysis of the Parc de La Villette, presented in the previous chapters, began with the presentation of the historical circumstances in which this urban concept was planned. The project of the Parc de La Villette by Bernard Tschumi won the competition announced in March 1982 and was realised thanks to the political atmosphere surrounding the victory of a left-wing candidate in the 1981 French presidential election. The correction of François Mitterrand's political programme and the replacement of radical economic reforms with the construction of prestigious architectural buildings and the creation of new urban concepts in the French capital gave Tschumi a unique chance to implement ideas



that polemicalised with traditional forms of social life, questioned the basic principles of architecture and included the work of architecture in philosophical disputes over the issues of metaphysics. The project of Parc de La Villette, created under the influence of the architect's political experience and connected with the philosophical concepts of French poststructuralists became a factor of reflection on the development of democracy and new forms of social life in a more advanced way than traditional political institutions.

Tschumi's theoretical assumptions proposed during the design of the Parc de La Villette highlighted the conflict issues of the main components of the project and suggested that the intensification of the differences is analogous to the concept of *différance* created by Derrida. The usual design process involves the representation of existing content. Tschumi replaced it with the creation of a situation in which the content could only appear. The new procedures assumed that the park would be a place where new meanings would be created rather than a place where ideas already known would be expressed. In this way, the park opened up to democracy, which, exceeding the current ideas about it, may arise in the future and threaten what had previously formed the foundation of the community. Such an openness crossed the borders of politics and by violating the known principles of architecture it became a part of the violations of the whole metaphysics. A "place" created by Tschumi ceased to be just a fragment of the city and overlapped with questions about the very concept of place and beginning. It was no coincidence that it linked with the concept of the *chôra* as the most originary place known in Western philosophy. Such a linkage brought far-reaching consequences, because the preoriginary emptiness inscribed in the city acts not only as the beginning of political activity, but also as the beginning of thought about the beginning and nature of emptiness. This inevitably led to the question: is emptiness neutral and atheological or, on the contrary, active and giving birth to new divine names? The participants in the design process were initially restrained towards the development of such questions, but over time they were encouraged to do so by the very logic of the problem. Although questions about the theological value of emptiness were posed only at the end of the discussion on the park, they became an inseparable part of the activity caused by this work. The park thus revealed its character of an area of happening of thinking, also thinking about *ultima ratio* issues.

Happening of thinking is a manifestation of a certain "is" or "*il y a*" in Emmanuel Levinas' understanding. This transition from nothingness to presence is a beginning of being through articulation, which can be described as spatialisation (*espacement*). This problem became part of Derrida's deliberations in his essay that was published in 1986 in Tschumi's publication presenting a series of graphics and a group of texts commenting on the theoretical foundations of the Parc de La Villette. Derrida linked the semantic emptiness represented in the park by the pavilions (*folies*) with such a form of spatiality that enables the thinking to reveal itself. He also introduced the concept of *maintenant*, which aimed to show that the architect's polemical inclinations remain in the hidden balance with his inclinations to affirm the oldest principles of architecture. *Maintenant* is the activation and consolidation of the present as the second, besides the spatiality, fragment of memory. Maintaining time in its basic form also became a guideline for affirmation of the task of maintaining originaryity in architecture. In Derrida's opinion, architecture activates memory, but it should also maintain it, but especially maintain its activation. The view of architecture's need to return to its *arche* is based on the conviction that such a returning, palin-tropical movement renews the deeper forces inherent in all originaryity.

In the history of philosophy, the *chôra* described by Plato is the most famous figure of the source of originaryity. Considerations on the *chôra* in the context of park design appeared as early as September 1985, when Peter Eisenman, who was to be involved in park planning, managed to convince Derrida to hold several discussion meetings. As described in this book, Derrida already during the first meeting introduced the issue of *chôra* to the conversation. Combining the problems of architecture and philosophy in the debate was made possible by the fact that Peter Eisenman had repeatedly acted earlier as an architect who criticized the overwhelming of architecture with the materiality of its products and opted, like



Tschumi, for strengthening its theoretical aspects. A similar role in the discussion was played by Jeffrey Kipnis, who as a summary of the conversation presented his essay *The law of ana-. On Choral Works*<sup>1</sup>. Following Derrida's essay *Khôra* (1987), Kipnis exposed the *chôra*'s originarity aspect and developed the thesis that she precedes every beginning, and is therefore earlier than any being or existence. Such a view was not original and cannot be attributed solely to Derrida's concepts, since it stems from a thorough reading of Plato's *Timaeus*. As a consequence of this discussion, its continuators (especially Brigitte Weltman-Aron) put forward the thesis that the park could be considered *chôric* because it was intended as a kind of urban void, with the aim of creating the conditions for initiating new forms of social existence. Such a theoretical assumption is unusual for architecture and required many stages towards the conclusion that the park elevates the forces inherent in thinking about emptiness and beginning. For all the premises of this thesis, the starting point were the fragments of Plato's *Timaeus* referring to the *chôra*.

It has already been mentioned that *Timaeus* was from the Antiquity to the Renaissance the most commented work of Plato. This was due to the theme of the creation of the world included in it. Nowadays, it has been put again into agenda due to the issues of the *chôra*, which aroused fascination among philosophers, researchers of rhetoric, religion, feminism, but also architects. The works about the *chôra* have also influenced the development of the interpretation of the Parc de La Villette, among which were the following: the sources of the active influence of the work on its users, the ways in which the park achieves this influence, its political and moral objectives, but also the reasons for which these objectives gain sublimation. The reason for the extraordinary sublimity of some characteristics of the real world was traditionally seen in God, but in the 20th century, under the influence of Mircea Eliade's ideas, more often their sacredness was mentioned, and nowadays the character of such values should be described as *chôric*. In connection with the change of terminology, the question of differences between these terms arose, because Christian theology emphasized the personal character of divinity, which in the concept of sacrum or *chôra* was negated and morally neutralized. Such negations have been denied and, after the discussion on this issue, it should be recognized that even "pure activity" manifesting itself in the real world is characterized positively and connected with ethical problems of people. Although, for obvious reasons, activity should not be considered a priori as a manifestation of good, such a view in relation to pure, source-based activity can be properly justified. Since all activity is evaluated morally by people and on the basis of their needs, in consequence it is related primarily to the behaviour of people and adopts personal values. Thus, what in philosophy is regarded as pure activity is a current moral and political issue dismantled into essential values.

The present-day deliberations on the *chôra* was sometimes started, as in the case of John Sallis, from reminding of the beginnings of the use of that word in ancient culture. In the early uses of the word *chôra* in Greek, as in the 18th Book of Homer's *Iliad*, it meant both dance and a place to dance. On this occasion it can be said that it is not possible to determine which of these phenomena had priority in the creation of the name. However, it cannot be denied that the word referred to a specific movement, as if circular and returning to an indeterminate beginning. Already Plato pointed to the cyclical character of this movement and nowadays it is described as palintropic (Maria Margaroni). Despite the fact that the word *chôra* has gained more and more general meanings, it has remained connected with the dance of people on the threshing floor, the dance of bees (*choros melton*) or the dance of stars (*choros astron*). In *Timaeus*, the *chôra* is a space filled with movement that produces an effect similar to that of shaking a sieve for screening grain: it separates similar and unlike elements. The juxtaposition of the Parc de La Villette and the *chôra* already at this stage suggests that the park was treated by the architect as a place of dynamic

<sup>1</sup> J. Kipnis, *The law of ana-. On Choral Works*, [in:] Peter Eisenman – *Recente projecten/Recent Projects*, ed. A. Graafland, Nijmegen 1989. *Idem*, *Twisting the Separatrix*, „Assemblage” 1991, no. 14; reprinted in: *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, ed. J. Kipnis, T. Leeser, New York 1997.

changes leading to the establishment of new social solutions. In his statements, the architect confirmed that the park was to be a space of new politics and ethics.

The book by Julia Kristeva *La Révolution du langage poétique* was instrumental in popularising the idea that works of art can play a role as factors in the political revolution. In this work, Kristeva put forward a thesis that the *chôra* is a kind of space whose character has a destructive effect on attempts to shut down language games. The *chôra* gives the beginning to the words, but at the same time, by leaving a trace of this beginning in them, it forces them to renew their meanings. The *chôra* understood in this way turns out to be an indelible beginning to which we must constantly return. Kristeva found manifestations of the *chôra*'s activity in avant-garde French poetry, to which she attributed the role of a mediator between the criticism of metaphysics and the aspirations for social change. By violating the language, the *chôra* introduces certain voids into it, as if traces of the abyss, which direct the consciousness towards understanding the necessity of political changes. The Parc de La Villette was supposed to pursue similar goals in the city space.

In his essays, Tschumi contemplated the problems of creating spaces that would give rise to radical democracy. The proposed rebel spaces should have features of voids, in which conflicting forces would appear as forms of pure activity. The means to achieve this goal was to concentrate the contradictions and make them visible. The Parc de La Villette was supposed to accumulate differences as incompatible and at the same time by showing them it was supposed to activate the awareness of the social world as a conglomerate of differences. The saturation of the park space with subversive values results from the character of this space, suppressed in the consciousness, as well as from insufficiently taken into account social diversity.

The main contradictions contained in space relate to the division that exists between its presentation as a mental and sensual problem. The park was a deliberate creation of a place that transcends such a division and creates a separate space for negotiation between architecture theories and its practical applications. The park's purpose was to become a place for future events that would not hide their conflicting character stemming from the differences that characterise both space and society. The method of composing, usually aimed at achieving a harmonious whole, has been replaced by Tschumi's system of juxtaposing non-coherent elements or elements resulting from variations and transformations.

Tschumi did not seek to gain direct political influence by the Parc de La Villette, but rather to make room for thinking about the possibilities of the future. He was more introducing the problems than showing their solutions. One of the park's tasks was to make the architectural principles vibrate in a way that would encourage users to participate in a new community. Such a thesis in relation to the objectives of the park can again be considered atypical in the context of normal architectural tasks, but it is possible to present a wider range of assumptions that make it likely.

Tschumi believes that the quality of architecture depends on the theoretical factor it contains. Such a view led to the creation of architecture that would achieve visibility and comprehensibility only after it had been interpreted. On the way to the creation of such architecture there were purely philosophical considerations of the architect on the basic building material of architecture, which is space. In 1975, he wrote the essay *Question of Space*, in which he included several dozen questions about the nature of space. The questions he formulated can be considered as analogous to the situation in the philosophy of the time, in which interest in questioning the most obvious forms of understanding the world and intellectual categories increased. The study of space is an area common to many fields of science, humanities and artistic creation, but it also deals with other problems, such as the issues of experience. The concept of space-time continuum proposed by Hermann Minkowski drew attention to the identity of time and space with the events taking place. Probably regardless of the postulates of physicists commenting on Albert Einstein's discoveries, also in philosophy the term of the event that has become dominant in Martin Heidegger's latest work, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, has grown in importance.

Tschumi's reflections on space also came into relation with the problem of experience, which aroused the interest of a group of French philosophers trying to assimilate the concept of Georges Bataille's "Inner Experience". Both Tschumi and Derrida referred to Bataille because his views could be helpful not only to modify the concept of the subject, but also to change the understanding of what constitutes the field of architecture. The discussion on experience has led to the recognition that the subject is not sovereign, but actually a form of what is on their outside. Such observations make it possible to treat the Parc de La Villette area as existing mainly when it is intellectually organised by its users. The decisive features of the Parc are its assumptions, according to which it is a kind of active emptiness that prompts to agree new social relations with it. The Parc does not force participation in already existing moral or political communities, but tries to move into an unknown future in which the scope of free functioning of individuals will be increased. Doubts about the functioning of the individual self and its discovery as a whole composed of non-coherent parts, as well as dependent on its depth full of disordered forces, influenced the understanding of architecture as a set of contradictions whose source is fundamental emptiness preceding the empty phenomenal space. The use of this phenomenal emptiness in architecture, as well as the rejection of the whole and unity, had a specific political purpose and drew inspiration from political analyses. In the Parc de La Villette an encounter between metaphysics and politics took place, because the philosophy of emptiness was used to create new conditions for the functioning of the community. One could argue that the source of this philosophy was the perception of the errors of existing societies that depended on deficiencies of traditional metaphysics.

Spatialisation (*espacement*) was one of the key terms for Derrida's philosophy, which was combined with the concepts of *différance* and *chôra*. The study of the nature of space, especially its transition from the level of pure possibility to the level of sensual phenomenon, also contributes to the understanding of the mode in which properly shaped space can influence its users. This explanation of this issue is based on Tschumi's assumption that the space of the Parc de La Villette rejects integrating approaches and instead exposes contradictions, but does so in a way that combines incompatible properties into a work of art. The specificity of such an integration is similar to the invention of a musical phrase, which is an ideological message: moral and political. Such a thesis may raise doubts, but if both the clearly adopted assumptions and those deduced from the work allow for their logically ordered presentation, to a limited extent it may be assumed that the work has achieved a connection between a specific philosophy of space and its practical application.

Derrida linked the issue of spatiality with the problem of transcendental imagination taken up in Immanuel Kant's philosophy. In the first version of *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant assumed that pure imagination precedes the appearance of time and space, even in their transcendental forms. Imagination in such a situation can be described as a factor activating time and space, which indicates the function that movement plays in this activity. This leads to the recognition that the ultra-originary source of pure forms of sensual intuition is motion, which in early Greek philosophy was identified with vacuum and its lack of resistance to phenomena occurring in it (Jean Bollock, Louise Burchill). Derrida's philosophy of seeking a certain supertranscendental source of time and space pointed to a *différance* which, like a vacuum or the *chôra*, has no substance characteristics or even any other form of being. *Différance* is the primary cause of the disruption of motionlessness and the introduction of activity into motionless time and space, and its effects can therefore be described as spatialisation (*espacement*). Derrida's discoveries in this regard recall the views of Hegel, who, while studying the present, pointed out that it is primarily a differentiating relationship (*differenten Beziehung*). This kind of relationship, being seemingly neutral, affects the present with supernatural force and makes it non-identical with itself. *Differenten Beziehung* must similarly influence the originary space, negating its initial character by multiplying its divisions and expanding its boundaries. *Différance* acts by revealing contradictions wherever there is apparent undifferentiation. Tschumi, composing the Parc de La Villette as a variation of emptiness and a set of



incompatible layers, followed the rules of *différance* or the *chôra*: he made emptiness visible with its saturation of contradictions.

If space can be considered to be the result of a difference, such action has a certain regularity which influences the behaviour of its observers. Differences or contradictions fall into a certain rhythm, which can be considered as a manifestation of transcendental order. The problem is that what can be considered the source of such order, the *logos* or God, is partly disorder and error. According to descriptions contained in *Timaeus*, the world is a combination of forces that drive to order with forces of erring necessity, which resounds in every order and compels to return to disorder. Derrida denied the possibility of understanding *différance* as a theological value, even if it were a negative or apophatic theology, but no categorical denial could be perfect. The assumption that *différance* or the *chôra* has no substantial properties cannot deny that they are active and therefore show some force. Philosophy has multiplied the names of such a force since Democritus and discussed the contradictory diversity of its manifestations, never forgetting the need for the mind to withdraw from the possibility of giving its correct characteristics (Wojciech Wrotkowski). The Parc de La Villette, which is an artistic consideration about the contradictions and forces behind them, can be considered a place of their elevation, and thus a variation of the temple of what is different from order and disorder.

The assumption that the Parc de La Villette imitates the principles of the *chôra*'s functioning leads us to draw attention to the features that have been linked with this concept in the philosophy of the 20th and 21st centuries. The analyses so far have concerned the works of Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida, but the *chôra* was also a concern in the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead in the 1920s and 1930s and, as a result of Derrida's work, it began to be discussed by a group of theologians (including John Caputo, Richard Kearney, John Manoussakis and Jean-Luc Marion). The discussion on the *chôra* developed in three main streams: the consideration of contemporary academic discoveries in the understanding of the *chôra* (Whitehead, Gardener), its interpretation as an ultratranscendental concept that would include a critique of the philosophy of presence (Derrida) and the study of similarities and differences between the *chôra* and God (the aforementioned theologians). All these trends were permeated by the question about the beginning of Being, being, God or thinking. The source of these reflections was the current crisis of metaphysics and the parallel crisis of the existing political principles. The climate of negation of old concepts was conducive to referring in the discussion to the theses of negative or apophatic theology. In the philosophical research carried out, it occurred that in concepts created with the intention of transcending traditional metaphysics and declared as atheistic (such as *différance* or the *chôra*), the threads of thinking about God, characteristic, for example, of Master Eckhart's theology, began to be discovered. Such a phenomenon was already known in philosophy, because on the one hand the concept of God since the time of Democritus assumed His functioning under many names, while on the other hand all new metaphysical concepts, such as Arthur Schopenhauer's *Wille*, Henri Bergson's *élan vital* or Heidegger's *das Sein*, in a hidden way inherited the reflection on the holy factor inherent in the principles of the world. All definitions of such a factor of power, despite its generality, had consequences for morality and politics, although perhaps they were only derived from these fields.

In his essays on the Parc de La Villette and other theoretical works, Bernard Tschumi used numerous negations referring to the traditional principles of architecture. Among other things, he declared his opposition to the creation of a work of art on the basis of commonly understood content (Non-Sense/No-Meaning), he promoted the use of the motifs of emptiness in architectural projects ("*le cases sont vides*"), and he also questioned the notion of unity or whole, as well as beginning and end. His vocabulary was also characterized by terms with negative prefixes: disruption, dissociation, disfunction, dispersion. All such expressions can be juxtaposed with a similar system of negations characteristic of negative theology, since they are part of a constantly renewed tradition of opposition to metaphysics that ignores contradictions. The philosophy of deconstruction, to which Tschumi included his theories had its origins





in Derrida's work on errors in Edmund Husserl's late work, but with its development it also undertook the analysis of many fundamental metaphysical concepts, especially the concept of the beginning. Such criticism inevitably led to a repetition of the inspirational ideas of apophatic philosophers whose views were considered a variation of the deconstruction *avant la lettre* (Caputo).

The continuation of questions about the features attributed to the *chôra* by philosophers and theologians makes it possible to identify among them those that may influence the formation of ethical and political views. Such searches were connected with the view that those ethical values, which coincide with them, promoted in the Parc de La Villette were elevated or even sacralised. The combination of certain contents of the philosophy of deconstruction with the category of sanctity occurred after Derrida began a discussion on the contemporary position of religion and presented the intuitions concerning the *chôra* in a language close to prophecies. In his work *Faith and Knowledge* he recounts the development of ethical thought based on the purification of ethical values from their dependence on dogmatic and institutionalised concepts of the divinity. He attributed such aspirations to Kant's philosophy, but when interpreting the history given by Derrida, it should be noted that Kant's separation of morality from religion was the foundation of a new religion and an attempt to create morality dependent on rational reflection, the assumptions of which cannot be fully justified rationally. In human behavior, there is a certain factor of internal coercion (*Categorischer Imperativ*) functioning in the making of choices, which does not find any obvious explanation. In the history of religious and philosophical beliefs outlined by Derrida, it is recalled that Hegel found a similar factor of coercion in the human intellect. In Hegel's opinion, this factor exceeds the human ability to manage one's own destiny and is a manifestation of absolute reason, and therefore an example of God's action as captured by atheistic philosophical concepts. According to Derrida, Heidegger yielded to a similar faith in the philosophically understood sanctity, which is reflected in the acts of openness to manifestations of pure Being (*das Sein*). The manifestation of *das Sein* in the form of "manifestness" (*Offenbarkeit*) is, according to Derrida, a new form of revelation (*Offenbarung*). But the problem noticed in the phenomenon of direct revealing of *das Sein* was the lack of its moral qualities. When Derrida described acting of *différance*, the *chôra* or *espacement*, he also initially believed that they were morally indifferent, but further discussion brought the conviction that neutrality could not function without its opposite in activity. Moreover, even if one assumes that the *chôra* is neutral in source terms, its manifestations must be assessed according to the moral needs of individuals or societies.

Cursory analyses of metaphysical and religious systems usually show their durability and invariability, while on closer examination they turn out to be variable and saturated with contradictions. In particular, religious theories conceal a contradiction concerning the claim that one has a valuable knowledge about the deity, which by definition must be an entity beyond the human cognitive capabilities. A certain easing of this contradiction was brought about by the works of theologians emphasizing the importance of negating the features commonly attributed to the deity or discussing the imperfections of thinking about God. Negative and apophatic philosophies also played a role in Heidegger and Derrida's criticism of metaphysics. From the criticism of traditional religious and philosophical concepts a new system emerges, which introduces concepts cleared of earlier metaphors and detached from old forms of worship. Over time, even such ultratranscendental notions grow into a mystical aura of words, find followers and are publicly elevated. Since its inception, the 20th century has brought a long series of quasi-religious concepts such as *sacrum*, *élan vital*, Being (*das Sein*) or transcendence. At the same time, attempts have been made to build entire religious systems based on the universalization of knowledge about religions, as exemplified by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy. The concepts of the *chôra*, *différance*, *tout autre* and *impossible* have also become part of new metaphysical trends and their religious consequences.

The difference between the characteristics of power described in the new metaphysical concepts resulted from their attempts to detach them from the anthropomorphic approaches. This tendency was clearly visible in Spinoza's descriptions of substances and in the concept of the absolute spirit in Hegel's

philosophy. Also in pantheism, God was dispersed in the entire being and He was immanent, not transcendent. It is interesting that atheistic thinkers and researchers (such as Hegel or Eliade), who connected the divinity with the being, have distinguished an active element in it, thus disturbing the logic of full immanence and perfect dissolution of the divinity in the world. Hegel's *der Absolute Geist* and Eliade's *sacrum* therefore lost their personal characteristics, but retained those of transcendent being or of being different from ordinary matter. In these concepts, the hierarchy of beings described in Plotinus' works was repeated. The "active element" did not cease to be associated with being, which was weakened only in Heidegger's philosophy which raised the rank of Being (*das Sein*) above being (*das Seiende*). By isolating in Being its lack of ground (*der Abgrund*), which was made possible by the influence of the philosophy of Eckhart, Heidegger opened up the possibility of questioning Being and paying attention to Non-Being. The God revealed belonged to the being (*esse*), in the area of Being it was rather only possible (*posse*, *prosopon*, Richard Kearney, Brian Treanor) and in the next step it became "impossible" (Derrida). The category of the Impossible plays an important role in the analysis of Non-Being and its features. Non-Being is also described in the analyses of the *chôra*, which in philosophy was the earliest manifestation of thinking about the preoriginal abyss, while at the same time inheriting the descriptions of originarity contained in the religious myths of Eastern origin.

The reasons for the interest in the *chôra* lie in the logic of the development of research on metaphysics, but the crisis of old metaphysics may also have its source in social changes. The circulation between politics and metaphysics is a constant phenomenon in the history of thought and the search for new social solutions is parallel to the research on originarity. Even in the situation of political stabilization, which is fundamentally illusory because it is impossible to achieve, there are ongoing deliberations on exceeding the *status quo* and reaching beyond the horizon of current possibilities. Thinking of the *chôra* as an emptiness active through its withdrawal from existence is part of the consideration about the Impossible as the absolutized horizon of human desires. God was only part of this shifting horizon, in which the questions about the unpredictable future and suggestions of attitude towards it arise. Societies are usually said to be afraid of a dangerous future, but opening up to it can be a more effective guarantee of security than stopping it. Studies on the *chôra* assumed exceeding the horizon of expectations and subjecting the unpredictable to another attempt to organize it. Along with such an attempt, another problem arises. The reflection on the Impossible cannot be protected against metaphors, sublimation and affirmation, within which there must appear a quasi-religious obligation to be open to the dangerous emptiness of the *chôra*. The *chôra* and the Impossible become the subject of apologetics and a system of beliefs whose aim is to overcome fears of the unknown, uncertain and fearsome. Yes, it can be said that freedom is always proclaimed at the beginning of such a system, but it is a value that is socially desirable only temporarily. Liberating oneself from one type of restriction is almost simultaneous with accepting other ones, and the affirmation or apologetics of new values with time becomes dogmatics. The revolutionary outbreak of freedom has often been accompanied by the construction of a new system of oppression and repression.

Thinking about the Impossible, although it was based on premises other than negative theology, repeated many motifs characteristic of negative, apophatic and mystical theologies. The descriptions of the *chôra* made by Derrida included metaphors to which Nicholas of Cusa, Eckhart or St. John of the Cross referred many times. All efforts to understand the *chôra* were also based on a way of purifying thoughts of what is known in order to make it possible to know what is unknown and unknowable. Among the mystics, the stages of the way towards knowing God, apart from commonly repeated associations, were presented by, among others, St. John of the Cross. In any other case, such aspirations have an analogous intention, which includes an attempt to capture such a form of the originary state as may be considered the space of pure revelation. Derrida's philosophy has followed a comparable path, but even replacing some terms with others and building seemingly new analogies, it inevitably pursues the goal of obtaining revelations with the characteristics of a new revelation.



Among the recurring motifs common to apophatic theologies and deconstruction, apart from the way of purifying the mind of ossified notions, there is also skepticism towards language. Distance towards the use of words directs attention to silence as the deepest source of language. The situation in which every statement as if *a priori* is marked by the impossibility of obtaining a correct result is treated as the most important reason for speaking, including praising the unspoken. Another common topic of reflection of the apophatics and Derrida was the concept of unity, which was a feature of God in Plotinus and Nicholas of Cusa, but in Derrida it turned into a reflection on the tensions that occur in every unity and make us think of unity as a unity of diversity. The difference that precedes the unification, or which fills the void or the unity, was also attributed to God in the writings of Caputo and made a guideline for the radicalization of democracy. Derrida's collaboration with theologians was a manifestation of the awareness of comparable problems of theology and deconstruction, but also of the sense of duty to derive moral and political conclusions from metaphysical concepts. The transfer of conclusions to the public space was connected with the strengthening of the components of sublimity in them and created new forms of worship, including new confessional spaces.

Tschumi's use of numerous expressions in his theoretical texts on the Parc de La Villette contradicting the unambiguous use of the principle of integration ("disjunctive analysis"), opposing the purposefulness or the simple understanding of the border, and the reference to the semantic void encourages further interpretations of these assumptions. Any negations used can now be juxtaposed with a kind of retreat, a palintropic movement, which can be identified as a means of revealing respect that allows pure activity, a new beginning, another God or the Impossible to manifest themselves. The emptiness in the Parc de La Villette with the features of the *chôra* encourages to search for the source of moral or political conduct beyond the limits of the previously known reasonableness and to enter a certain impossible order. Tschumi's attitude shows a determination which prompts to compare it with the behaviour of a representative of religious beliefs. Suggestions allowing for such an analogy were presented by various authors, starting with Derrida himself, who juxtaposed various forms of withdrawal or silence with acts of contemplation and prayer. Following this path one can describe the Parc de La Villette as a new form of place of cult, in this case the cult of negation and contradiction. Metaphorically speaking, the Parc de La Villette can be characterized as a cathedral or a *summa* of contradictions. Panofsky once interpreted French Gothic cathedrals as a variation of scholastic theological *summa*, whereas in the case of the park we are dealing with a combination of negative concepts. Similarly to the emptying old religious beliefs of traditional associations, the Parc de La Villette has abandoned its traditional layout and facilities. All existing routes and structures in the park are secondary to the basic design principle, which was the negation of the usual design principles. As it has already been described, the set of negations used was extensive.

In the circle of theologians, the *chôra* was considered a new name for God and although there was no consensus in this discussion, some of the commentators made the observation that the concepts that were analysed in the circle of the philosophy of deconstruction create a certain system of metaphysical assumptions having features of religious beliefs. The theses put forward in the philosophy of deconstruction require some kind of trust, and thus an act described as a "leap of faith" and confirmation by believers. Religious features of deconstruction are not dominant in it, but the affirmative attitude recommended by Derrida may also obtain spatial conditions and be reflected in architectural works. In its beginnings, the religion of deconstruction was more of a liberation, a movement of freedom than a constraint, but both Derrida and his commentators have developed its metaphysical foundations into a program to protect diversity and singularity in the social sphere and to build a community that radicalizes democracy (Caputo). In many of its developed manifestations, the philosophy of deconstruction has shifted towards the formulation of various kinds of moral recommendations that are comparable to religious precepts. The ethics emerging from deconstruction stems from the exchange of inspirations between the social world

and philosophical reflections. The Parc de La Villette is not only an expression of this exchange, but also a part of the reflection. Undertaking the tasks of religion by art, elevating certain values, interpreting them or expressing own views on moral or political issues is a well-established task of art. Currently, such use of art has been strengthened by the actions of artists more strongly emphasizing their interest in philosophy and participating in philosophical discussions as fully legitimate participants. Such a situation also changed the status of the work of art, which has been so permeated with theory that it is largely produced only at the stage of its interpretation. The existence of a work of art as a material object has lost its important position, while the importance of its philosophy and interpretation has increased.

In the specific case of the Parc de La Villette, the work of art was made up of Tschumi's statements that the planned park questioned various forms of order and composition in architecture and that its problem was to be a built theory or a theoretical building. The next part of the work was drawings showing superimposed layers of the park which could not be seen by its users. The main ornaments of the park, i.e. the red pavilions, developed a polemic with the principle of purposefulness and the representation of specific ideological contents by the work of art. They complemented other negations and were associated with voids (*"le cases sont vides"*), which can be interpreted as analogons of the *chôra*, originarity and renewable beginning. The multiplication of possibilities presented by the variants of the pavilions was connected with calls to strengthen individual freedom and create societies that better understood the Otherness (including the specific otherness of foreign, marginalized or socially excluded people).

The question remains whether works of art have the right qualities to become carriers of such complex messages. Even in Panofsky's research, the Gothic cathedrals of the Île-de-France region resembled scholastic philosophy only in their structure, which was bravely attributed with the features of the *manifestatio* principle: holistic approach, logical articulation and beauty. Extensive criticism of iconology by Lorenz Dittmann, Ernst Gombrich and Oskar Bätschmann pointed to its errors, which mostly concerned the influence of Hegel's historiosophy on this methodology. The raised objections therefore lead to repeating again the question posed several times in this work: on what principles may the Parc de La Villette participate in philosophical disputes and, in particular, participate in the discussions on the *chôra*? Summing up the various attempts at answering the questions, it can be recalled that Tschumi's design activity was preceded by his statements inspired by the achievements of philosophers of post-structuralism and deconstruction. The views proclaimed by Tschumi transferred philosophical problems to the area of architectural theory and tried to create their equivalents also in urban planning. The philosophers' interest in questioning metaphysics, including the idea of principles, beginnings and purposefulness, found justified equivalents in Tschumi's theories. The philosophical thesis that the beginning has been grounded on the lack of ground and the association of this lack with the spatially elaborated urban void obtained by depriving the Parc de La Villette of its traditional distinguishing features can be proved by the arguments of the architect himself, as well as by interpretations of the unusual design. The theoretical assumptions, the author's comments and interpretations resulting from the analysis of the completed work show understandable and presentable analogies. The connection between the spatial void and the *chôra* is also due to the fact that Derrida, Eisenman and Tschumi had a permanent discussion on this subject, which was later discussed by commentators such as Kipnis and Weltman-Aron. During the development of the discussion, void and the *chôra* began to be juxtaposed with the notions of *différance*, *espacement* (Burchill) and in the further discussion also the question was raised: to what extent can the treatment of active void, saturated with contradictory elements, as a form of pure activity (Whitehead, Ogrodnik) or even God (Caputo, Kearney, Manoussakis) be justified? The motif of emptiness or the *chôra* as an analogon of God and at the same time the basis of a work of architecture or art is also known in Byzantine theology, which became the subject of deliberations of Manoussakis or Isar. The analogies presented in this work are forms of cognitive tools that may be questionable, but they are presented here primarily on the principle of *relata refero*. Such a presentation demonstrates that what was treated by





Panofsky as internal content of a work of art (intrinsic meaning) is the interpretation of researchers assigned to it completely externally. The tradition of speaking about the ideological content of a work of art should be complemented by the observation of the dominant position of explanations in the creation of its being status. The Parc de La Villette as an intentional object is not rooted in its material existence, but in the architect's theoretical assumptions, comments on the work and philosophical discussions related to the content given to it.

However, the question remains unsolvable: how do ideas, whether purely transcendent, transcendental or produced in the works of theologians, moral or political philosophers, pass into the phenomenal world? As a formula for an answer, the history of philosophy constantly recalls in this matter the Platonic concept of *chôra*, which cannot be decided whether she is an active participant in everything that appears to be real, or to what extent she disturbs everything that appears to be real. Equally serious arguments are put forward in support of the thesis that the *chôra* is only a neutral container (*ekmageion*, *Timaeus*, 50c2) or a mirror for ideas, something like a shiny liver (*hepar*, *Timaeus* 71a–72d). In the works of some philosophers, the opposite is true: her capabilities are exaggerated and she is identified with God. Although she is a theoretical being, not a real one, in all these cases the *chôra* is made responsible for the transition from an idea to a phenomenon.

An illusion, which appears in space together with a reflection provided by the *chôra*, can be considered a model of instability and visionality as characteristic features of a work of art. Like the *chôra*, the being of a work of art is not located in reality, but rather in the creation of a certain illusion. It can therefore be considered that the *chôra* adopts spatial conditions such as the Parc de La Villette or, conversely, the park adopts properties attributed to the *chôra* imagined by philosophers. It is not necessary to decide whether the *chôra* is a certain formula of being that is transcendent, but finds equivalents in reality, since it can be sufficiently useful a view that it is a form of emptiness endowed by the creator with a limitation, in which concrete content is inscribed. The pre-existence of emptiness as a condition for inscribing content is a hypothesis resulting from philosophical inclinations to seek the condition of conditions”, but such inclinations only lead to new names being given to the same unknown “condition of conditions”. In the traditional approach it is the *logos* that manifest itself in sounds, articulations and spatialisations, in much less traditional approaches it is the speaker, philosopher or artist who creates images that, despite their unreality, influence the audience. The space into which the artist inscribes their intentions was usually commented on by various people, but nowadays the role of such commentary has increased, and it can be seen that such space changes under the influence of comments created about it. The intentions of an artist, both clearly declared and those assigned and added to them, form layers of content of a created work. Such content is sometimes dressed in pathos, sacralised or sublimated, contributing to the fact that its images become part of beliefs, even of a completely secular origin. It seems justified to consider the Parc de La Villette also as a space of sublimating the convictions of its creators and commentators. The spatial annexes to the park, added by the interpreters in opinions produced by them, further develop its theoretical and *chôric* character.

#### Słowa kluczowe

projekt parku de La Villette, architektura i teoria Bernarda Tschumiego, filozofia chôry, teologia apofatyczna, post-sekularyzm, Inność, tout autre, Niemożliwe

#### Keywords

design of the Parc de La Villette, architecture and theory of Bernard Tschumi, concept of *chôra*, apophatic theology, postsecularism, Otherness, tout autre, Impossible



---

### References

1. **Kipnis Jeffrey**, *The law of ana-: On Choral Works*, [in:] *Peter Eisenman – Recente projecten/Recent Projects*, ed. A. Graafland, Nijmegen 1989.
2. **Kipnis Jeffrey**, *Twisting the Separatrix*, „Assemblage” 1991, no. 14; reprinted in *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, ed. J. Kipnis, T. Leiser, New York 1997.

---

**Dr. habil. Cezary Was**, [wascezar@gmail.com](mailto:wascezar@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0002-5163-9248

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław. Curator of the Museum of Architecture. Author of the books: *Antynomie współczesnej architektury sakralnej* (Antinomies of the Contemporary Sacred Architecture, 2008), *Architektura a dekonstrukcja. Przypadek Petera Eisenmana i Bernarda Tschumi* (Architecture and Deconstruction. The case of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi, 2015) and dozens of articles on phenomena of the ancient and modern culture.

### Summary

**CEZARY WAS (University of Wrocław) / The Shadow of God in the Garden of the Philosopher. The Parc de La Villette in Paris in the context of philosophy of chôra. Part V: Conclusion**

In the traditional sense, a work of art creates an illustration of the outside world, or of a certain text or doctrine. Sometimes it is considered that such an illustration is not literal, but is an interpretation of what is visible, or an interpretation of a certain literary or ideological message. It can also be assumed that a work of art creates its own visual world, a separate story or a separate philosophical statement. The Parc de La Villette represents the last of these possibilities: it is a philosophical statement that develops the premises derived from poststructuralist philosophies and the philosophy of deconstruction. The uniqueness of its being status, however, is that it does so not only at the level of the theoretical assumptions, but also through its functioning as an active philosophical work. This means that a park is a happening philosophy. Its activity, however, does not refer only to the present tense, but is also an attempt to penetrate the future, all otherness and impossibility. This kind of activity assumes that the work, in a sense, does not yet fully exist, but is also still produced in the processes of its interpretation.

The theoretical foundations of the park included texts by Bernard Tschumi, in which he questioned traditional ways of creating a work of architecture, postulating in return the use of a long series of negations, which were comparable to the crisis of metaphysics characteristic of contemporary philosophy. It is therefore no coincidence that the publication containing Tschumi's theoretical text on Parc de La Villette was accompanied by an essay by Jacques Derrida developing some of the architect's concepts. The next step in integrating philosophy into the process of park design was a series of discussions between Peter Eisenman and Derrida, who completely moved the creation of the park into the world of thoughts, without accentuating the need for their realization in the material reality. The main topic of these discussions was the problem of the *chôra*, which was taken up by later commentators and used to interpret the park as a work in which the philosophy of the beginning is manifested relating to issues of politics, morality and religion. The park was therefore interpreted as a space of invention within the scope of creating new rules of functioning of the community and democracy. Thinking about the political future may, however, exceed the horizon of ordinary expectations. Although philosophical thought is always connected with contemporary problems and metaphysics sometimes intertwines with current politics, yet at the same time the customs of philosophy also include crossing horizons and thinking about absolute otherness and impossibility.

Initially, the *chôra*, *différance*, Absolute Otherness (*tout autre*) and the Impossible were concepts of pure philosophy of atheistic character, but with the further development of the discussion, more and more theological motifs began to emerge. One of the reasons for this phenomenon was the fact that radical negations of all being, which were contemplated in contemporary philosophy (by Heidegger and Derrida, among others), had previously been manifested in negative and

apophatic theologies (by Master Eckhart, among others). Also the category of the “Other”, taken from Emmanuel Levinas, was clearly connected with the thought about God. A further reason for connecting the *chôra* with the theological thought was the interest in the philosophy of deconstruction expressed by some theologians. Caputo in particular managed to persuade Derrida to participate in discussions on the current status of religion. In the late period of Derrida’s writing, further statements on religious topics appeared. All these reasons led to posing a question about the identity of the *chôra* and God. Although there were no satisfactory conclusions on this issue, the discussion was also important to create an interpretation of the park as a place of worship.

The *chôra*, representing, according to Plato, the preoriginal emptiness is the place of every beginning, but it turns out that it is not neutral to the being created in it. The *chôra* deposits itself in every being as an irremovable beginning that interferes with its stability. The *chôra*, therefore, forces us into a palintropical movement, but it also turns out to be a pure compulsion, an erring necessity and a fundamental force from which, in the human perception, motifs useful to the individual and to the community are extracted. All definitions of this force, including its anthropomorphisation, are formulated in such a way that they allow for building private and collective morality upon them. Such definitions are changed depending on variable political situations. It is difficult to determine whether in the processes of changes in the formulation of “God’s names” any essential value is retained, which is not subject to change. The current definitions of the *chôra* (God?), which can be found, for example, in the philosophy of Caputo, stress that she is a combination of various and contradictory forces. This characteristic inherits much of Plato’s concept, reminds us of Master Eckhart’s views on *Gottheit* and, at the same time, is not unfamiliar to Tschumi, whose essays were an apologia of contradictions. The current concept of *chôra*, transferred into the sphere of politics, is the praise of social diversity and the protection of the difference from the forces of order. In the Parc de La Villette, the future community and democracy were elevated as a system of safe existence of individuals in all their singularity. The park is a temple of a future community in which individual beings have nothing in common.