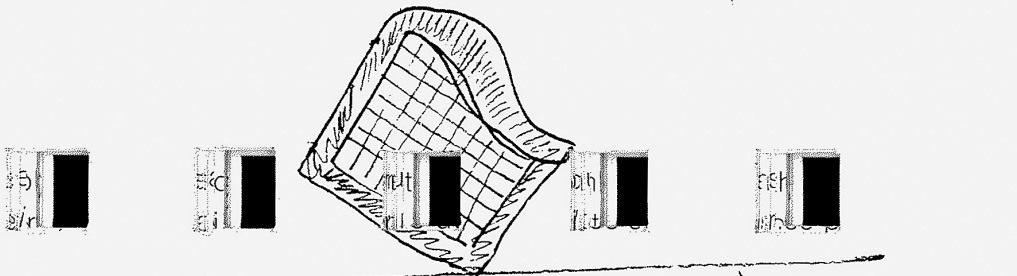


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tu es de ressentir et le son à un team, à  
un 'cible' ou une grille (GRID) et  
à un instrument de musique à corde (CHORD).  
(piano, harpe, lyre?)



En tant que grille, grid, etc. il aurait un  
certain rapport avec le pellet interprété et  
sélecté par une grille de son et de cible  
les 3 ét et les 3 cordes (PDE, RT, LV) etc.  
En tant que harmonie de la corde il ferait  
s'ajoute le chôra de la corde work work work  
~~interprétation~~ Le son que rien ne devrait être  
inscrit sur cette sculpture, à moins que peut-être,  
est le site et un système n'y figurent que  
part (Choral work, by ... - 1986 ...) - A distance,  
entre autres choses.

J. Derrida, sculpture design for the Parc de La Villette presenting chôra, Letter to Peter Eisenman of 30 V 1986.  
After: Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman, ed. J. Kipnis, T. Leeser, 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

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#### 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 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 (*differente Beziehung*). This kind of relationship, being seemingly neutral, affects the present with supernatural force and makes it non-identical 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 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.

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**Słowa kluczowe**

projekt parku de La Villette, architektura i teoria Bernarda Tschumiego, filozofia chôry, teologia apofatyczna, post-sekularyzm, Inność, tout autre, Niemożliwe

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**Keywords**

design of the Parc de La Villette, architecture and theory of Bernard Tschumi, concept of *chôra*, apophatic theology, postsecularism, Otherness, tout autre, Impossible

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### 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.