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*[1]. 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".

[1] See **B. Ogrodnik**, *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 Asyria*, ed. A. H. Layard, London 1853, Plate 5. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiamat#/media/File:Chaos_Monster_and_Sun_God.png (access date: 1 IX 2019)

[2] *The Timaeus of Plato*, 53a, transl. R. D. Archer–Hind, London – New York 1888, p. 187.

[3] **B. Ogrodnik**, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

[4] *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)[2]. 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[3]. 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"[4].

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 co-incidence, 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[5]. 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[6]. 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[7]. 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[8], 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[9].

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

[5] 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.

[6] See **W. Wrotkowski**, *Jeden wieloimienny. Bóg Heraklita z Efezu*, Warszawa 2008.

[7] 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.

[8] **J. D. Caputo**, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, New Jersey 1986.

[9] 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.

[10] 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.

[11] See **G. Vatimo**, *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.

[12] **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. Anidjar**, New York – London 2002.

[13] **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*[10].

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[11]. 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*[12]. 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*[13]

and *Faith and Knowledge* (1802)[14], 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[15]. "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*[16]. 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[17].

> *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-

[14] **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.

[15] 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".

[16] **J. Derrida**, *Faith and Knowledge…*, pp. 53–55.

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 58.

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 59.

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 100.

[20] See **M. Heidegger**, *Letter on Human-ism*, transl. F. A. Capuzzi, J. G. Gray, [in:] **M. Heidegger**, *Pathmarks*, ed. **W. Mac-Neil**, Cambridge 1998, p. 250: "[T]he reversal of a metaphysical statement re-mains a metaphysical statement". See also: **M. Heidegger**, *Brief über den Hu-manismus*, [in:] *idem*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9: *Wegmarken*, Hrsg. **F.–W. von Her-rmann**, Frankfurt am Main 1976, p. 328: "*[D]ie Umkehrung eines metaphysischen Satzes bleibt ein metaphysischer Satz*".

[21] **J. D. Caputo**, *Apostles of the Impossi-ble: On God and the Gift in Derrida and Marion*, [in:] *God, the Gift and Postmod-ernism*, ed. *idem*, **M. J. Scanlon**, Bloom-ington 1999.

[22] **M. Hägglund**, *Radical Atheism: Derri-da and the Time of Life*, Stanford 2008; *idem*, *The Radical Evil of Deconstruction: A Reply to John Caputo*, "Journal for Cul-tural and Religious Theory" 2011, no. 2.

ed to above (between revelation and revealability, *Offenbarung* and *Offen-barkeit*, between event and possibility or virtuality of the event), must it not be respected for itself? Respect for this singular indecision or for this hyper-bolic outbidding between two originarities, the order of the "revealed" and the order of the "revealable", is this not at once the chance of every responsi-ble decision and of another "reflecting faith" of a new "tolerance"?[18]

On the bottom without bottom of an always virgin impassibility, *chôra* of to-morrow 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[19].

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[20]. Similarly, resistance against the sacralization of the concept of *chôra* must have been equally im-perfect, 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* clos-er 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*"[21]. 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 partici-pants of the discussion who, like Martin Hägglund, tried to save the radically atheistic character of the philosophy of deconstruction were marginalized[22]. 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[23]. 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[24]. *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

[23] **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.

[24] **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.

25 **J. Derrida**, *Donner la mort* [in:] *Donner la mort. L'éthique du don: Jacques Derrida et la penée du don*, [Colloque de Royau-mont, 6–9 XII 1990], transl. J.–M. Rabaté, M. Wetzel, 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 pre-cedes Being, and is even more empty and nameless. If, however, one cannot stop talking about her, it means that her violence is also orient-ed and she takes names. If, however, one cannot stop talking about her, it means that her violence is also oriented and she takes names. Ori-entantion 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 neu-tral 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, wor-shiping 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*"[25]) 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 struc-tural 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"[26]. God is a metaphysical ground even for eternity, while *différance* immerses eternity in itself, depriving it of its right to exist[27].

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[28].
>
> 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[29].

Referring to Jean-François Courtine's article[30], 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")[31]. 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.

[26] **I. Edwards**, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[27] *Ibidem.*

[28] **J. Derrida**, *Faith and Knowledge*, p. 85.

[29] *Ibidem*, note 39.

[30] **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.

[31] **J. Derrida**, *Faith and Knowledge…*, p. 85.

[32] **I. Edwards**, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

[33] *Ibidem.*

[34] See *ibidem*: "Deconstruction has noth–ing to do with mysticism".

[35] **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.

[36] **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"[32]. 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"[33]. In spite of serious differences, they both demand initial trust to which – contrary to Edwards' assertions – an ecstatic and mystical moment should be attributed[34]. 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[35]. 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[36].

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 Imposible 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[37].

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"[38].

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

[39] **I. Almond**, *Negative Theology, Derrida and the Critique od Presence: a Poststruc–turalist 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"[39]. 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 glîch enist noch niht glîch enmac warden*")[40], 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 atributeless space, defined by Eckhart as a Godhead, is radically incomprehensible, he was able to attribute many properties to it[41]. *Gottheit* (Godhed, 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"[42]. "The Godhead is a space where names are forbidden", commented Almond[43]. 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 Himsef. 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*[44]). 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[45]. 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-

[40] **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 (قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ) (**J. M. Clark**, *op. cit.*, p. 239).

[41] **I. Almond**, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

[42] *Ibidem*, p. 153, note 12.

[43] *Ibidem*, p. 153.

[44] 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.

[45] **I. Almond**, *op. cit.*, p. 154

[46] **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".

[47] See **I. Almond**, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

[48] *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[46]. 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[47]. 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"[48]. 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 preoriginary space and the imperfection of the language, lead to the annulment of the validity of

[49] J. D. Caputo, *The Return…*

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 *Gottheit* 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[49]. 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 *(phaínesthai)*. 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,

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

[51] **B. Treanor**, *The God Who May Be: Quis ergo amo cum deum meum amo?*, "Revista Portoguesa de Filozofia" 2004, no. 4, pp. 993.

[52] **R. Kearney**, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting otherness*, London – New York 2002, p. 204.

[53] **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* (וּהֹבָו וּהֹת)[50] 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"[51], 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?[52]

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*" (רשא רשא היהא; הֶיְהֶא רֶשֲא הֶיְהֶא; היהא")" – "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"[53]. 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[54]. 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?*"[55]. 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[56]. [...]
> The two are as inextricably linked as siamese twins but they beat with different hearts[57].

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

[54] 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 "*hervorkommen*" and "*entziehen*" related to the movements of being and oscillation in these movements.

[55] **Augustine**, *Confessions* and *Enchridion*, 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)*".

[56] **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.

[57] **R. Kearney**, *Khora...*, p. 119.

[58] **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*)"[58]. 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*).

[59] **P. Dybel**, *"Panie Heidegger, kiedy pan napisze etykę?". Egzystencjalna relaty–wizacja 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[59], 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 (*Gottheit*) 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 Kerarney, 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[60]. 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"[61].

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.

[60] **J. Manoussakis**, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

[61] *Ibidem*, p. 98.

⁶² **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.

⁶³ 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.

⁶⁴ **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 *chôrêtòn kaì achôrêtòn*⁶², an oxymoron that can be translated as "that which occupies space, and does not occupy space"⁶³. 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 Ἅγιου Σωτῆρος ἐν τῃ Χώρᾳ")⁶⁴. 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 τού 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 τών 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 alsothe *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[65]. 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[66].

> 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*)[67].

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

[65] **N. Isar**, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[66] See *ibidem.*

[67] *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 hepathetic 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.

8. A hepatic park[68], 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*. Salis in *Chorology* showed that in Plato's opinion the *chôra* was repeated in the liver (ἧπαρ), thus in the organ, which was attributed a key role in the human body[69]. 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

[68] The adjective "hepatic" used in the sub-title, is of Latin origin but has its source in the Greek word ἡπατικός and is a derivative of ἧπαρ.

[69] **J. Sallis**, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 135; **N. Isar**, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45.

[70] **N. Isar**, *op. cit.*, pp. 45–46.

[71] See *ibidem*, p. 46.

[72] 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" (*ecstatikoî*), but being in the "fullness of God" (*enthoi*) have access to divine messages (*Timaeu*s, 71e)[70]. The recipients of higher inspirations are also fortune-tellers reading from the liver of sacrificial animals, such as the diviner (*haruspex*) Chalchas mentioned in the Iliad, or poets and artists[71]. 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[72]. 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 Villete 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 politicaleistic 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 included 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-nā'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-Babilonian 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 atopical.

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

Assistant Professor at the Institute of Art History, University of Wroclaw. 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 Wroclaw) / 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.