

Summary

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

In the texts that presented the theoretical assumptions of the Parc de La Villette, Bernard Tschumi used a large number of terms that contradicted not only the traditional principles of composing architecture, but also negated the rules of social order and the foundations of Western metaphysics. Tschumi's statements, which are a continuation of his leftist political fascinations from the May 1968 revolution, as well as his interest in the philosophy of French poststructuralism and his collaboration with Jacques Derrida, prove that terms such as disruption, dissociation, disfunction, disjunctions and dispersion not only referred to architectural problems but also applied to political criticism and the deepest foundations of thinking itself. His collaboration with Derrida manifested itself primarily in the publication *La Case Vide: La Villette*, 1985, in which the architect's design drawings and texts explaining his concepts related to the Parc 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 Villette then gained new post-secular meanings, which allow it to be assigned the function of a Temple of Otherness (*L'Autre*) and Impossible.