

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

<sup>6</sup> See E. Bianchi, *Receptacle/Chōra: Figuring the Errant Feminine in Plato’s Timaeus*, “Hypatia” 2006, no. 4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

590

ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις,  
τῷ ἴκελον οἷόν ποτ’ ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ  
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδῃ.  
ἔνθα μὲν ἠΐθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεισίβοιοι  
ὄρχευντ’ ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χειρὰς ἔχοντες.

595

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

600

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

605

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

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

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

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

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



<sup>13</sup> See Plato, *Timaeus*, <http://www.ellopos.net/elpenor/physics/plato-timaeus/space.asp?pg=5> (access date: 1 III 2019): “[52d] Οὗτος μὲν οὖν δὴ παρὰ τῆς ἐμῆς μῆφου λογισθεὶς ἐν κεφαλαίῳ δεδόσθω λόγος, ὃν τε καὶ χώραν καὶ γένεσιν εἶναι, τρία τριχῆ, καὶ πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι: τὴν δὲ δὴ γενέσεως τιθῆναι ὑγραινόμενην καὶ πυρουμένην καὶ τὰς γῆς τε καὶ ἀέρος μορφὰς δεχομένην, καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτοις πάθῃ συνέπεται πάσχουσαν, [52e] παντοδαπὴν μὲν ἰδεῖν φαίνεσθαι, διὰ δὲ τὸ μῆθ’ ὁμοίων δυνάμεων μῆτε ἰσορρόπων ἐπιμίπλασθαι κατ’ οὐδὲν αὐτῆς ἰσορροπεῖν, ἀλλ’ ἀνωμάλως πάντη ταλαντούμενην σείεσθαι μὲν ὑπ’ ἐκείνων αὐτήν, κινουμένην δ’ αὖ πάλιν ἐκεῖνα σείειν: τὰ δὲ κινούμενα ἄλλα ἄλλοσε αἰετὸν φέρεσθαι διακρινόμενα, ὥσπερ τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν πλοκάνων τε καὶ ὀργάνων τῶν περὶ τὴν τοῦ σίτου κάθαρσιν σειόμενα καὶ ἀνικνύμενα τὰ μὲν πυκνὰ καὶ βαρῆα ἄλλη, [53a] τὰ δὲ μανὰ καὶ κοῦφα εἰς ἕτεραν ἴζει φερόμενα ἔδραν: τότε οὕτω τὰ τέτταρα γένη σείόμενα ὑπὸ τῆς δεξαμενῆς, κινουμένης αὐτῆς οἷον ὀργάνου σεισμόν παρέχοντος, τὰ μὲν ἀνομοιότατα πλείστον αὐτὰ ἀφ’ αὐτῶν ὀρίζειν, τὰ δὲ ὁμοιότατα μάλιστα εἰς ταῦτὸν συνωθεῖν, διὸ δὴ καὶ χώραν ταῦτα ἄλλα ἄλλην ἴσχειν, πρὶν καὶ τὸ πᾶν ἐξ αὐτῶν διακοσμηθῆν γενέσθαι. καὶ τὸ μὲν δὴ πρὸ τούτου πάντα ταῦτ’ εἶχεν ἀλόγως καὶ ἀμέτρως”.

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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





<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 177–179.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 183–185.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### The political nature of an urban laceration

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

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

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



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


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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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#### Słowa kluczowe

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

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#### Keywords

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### Summary

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

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

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

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