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LOST IN SPACE

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THE SACRED SPACE

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Epiphaneia has to do with appearing,
visibility being the evidence for
existence: *epiphaneia* is visible surface,
and testifies to coming-to-light.
Indra Kagis McEwan (1997, 88)

In the Holy Bible, one of the most significant events after Genesis refers, less to the ability of Adam's son to found cities where for the moment there was nobody to live,¹ than to a dream the consequence of which was a founding gesture.² Here is the relevant passage from the Old Testament:

10. Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. 11. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13. There above

¹ In the initial loneliness, Cain must have gone about his task in the same way as Amphion did later on when building Thebes.

² This was also invoked by Mircea Eliade in his 1957 book *The Sacred and the Profane* (see p. 26 of the Romanian edition, Ed. Humanitas, 1992).

it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14. Your descendants will be the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16. *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought: "Surely the LORD is in this and I was not aware of it."* 17. *He was afraid and said: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God: this is the gate of heaven.*

18. Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it (my italics: A .I.). 19. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

20. Then Jacob made a vow, saying: "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21. so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and *this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.*" (my italics: A. I.).³

Sleeping in the wilderness, "in a certain place" chosen only because at sunset he had to stop somewhere, Jacob dreamed that exactly on that spot – we can infer that he lay down his dream-invaded head in the right place – the sky opened, with angels descending and ascending, and then the Lord himself showed up on top of the ladder. First, we must

³ *Genesis*, 28: 10–22 (University Edition of the Bible, International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, USA, 1984).

note how Eliade-like is the sacred space of our story, perfectly camouflaged by the profane. Anonymous and lacking any defining traits, it is situated geographically in “a certain place” and Jacob seemingly chose it at random. Eliade himself shows that a sign is needed to distinguish a sacred space, and “when no sign becomes manifest in the vicinity, then it is provoked” (Eliade, 1992, 27).

We are a long way from that “lofty place” demanded by Alberti to serve as a foundation for a temple, a place “visible from any direction” (Leon Battista Alberti, 1988, 195). Two questions arise in relation to sacred space, which the fragment does not answer:

(i) Is Jacob a *discovering agent* in respect of the sacred space? Is he unconsciously attracted to that place because he is a chosen one and therefore in all likelihood equipped with a particular sensitivity for places which one might characterize as sacred space, even if he cannot explain how he does it (“Surely the LORD is in this place and I was not aware of it”)? From his question, we can infer that his discovery of this sacred space and his presence there are two different things: the sacred space has always existed there, or, in human terms, it at least precedes the unveiling of its presence in our world.

(ii) The second question follows if we are not certain of the answer to the first: Can the god be willing to *set up*, as a prerogative of his power, “a place”, no matter how humble or insignificant, which he then, showing himself to a chosen subject, establishes as sacred space, so depriving us of an opportunity to ‘discover’ it? In the background of this second question lies the fact that the setting up by the god of a sacred space corresponds in time to its ‘discovery’ by the one chosen to do it; in other words, that the sacred space ‘begins’ – that is, has a temporal origin – and that no geographic or spatial

configuration is more favourable. Once discovered, beyond any discussion of its nature or beginnings, this ‘channel’ of communication – which ordinary men have until then passed by and failed to notice – must be made visible in such a way that the same mortal being crossing the wilderness would understand it as something out of the ordinary. Once located, sacred space cuts the place of its location out of the contingent.

Jacob decides to erect a monument – to leave a trace – and, furthermore, to perform a setting-up ritual which is a gesture of both humiliation and enthusiasm: humiliation because, having been blind in broad daylight, he had been ignorant of the special character of that place until that time; enthusiasm because, at long last, even if accidentally – even in his sleep – his blindness has ended. If other people wish to keep this sacred place visible they must take care of the *monument* or, better, augment it; this will remind them every time they pass by that they are in the vicinity of a ‘wormhole’,⁴ of a communication channel with the heavens. If they fail to maintain it – and therefore to remember – the visibility of this ‘happy accident’ will fade; the stones erected against oblivion

⁴ A term originally proposed by science-fiction authors to help solve the difficulties of space travel. A wormhole is a privileged space (or an accident?) *in* space, a whirlpool after passing through which the interstellar traveller finds himself—time being somehow suspended within the wormhole—in a different part of the universe, a significant distance from the first. The wormhole allows the space traveller to cross unimaginably great distances. Some of the episodes in the Star Trek series, especially *Deep Space Nine*, use this aspect strange character of four-dimensional space. The wormhole is a catastrophe—in the sense of the theory of the same name—in space, which may be used to indicate the discontinuity characteristic of sacred space, a discontinuity that Eliade identified in the *axis mundi*, the tree of life, as found in such expressions as the ‘navel of the earth’.

will fall back into the wilderness and the place will return to chaos.

Terms: Definitions and Critique

The story ends here, at least for the moment. In order to make further headway we must introduce and comment on the key-term with which the text operates. What is the 'sacred' and what is 'sacred space'? It is a good idea in such cases to consult a number of good dictionaries, settling the etymology of the word in question. The *Petit Robert* (1993) gives a 'territorial' and comparative definition of the sacred, one which is at the same time limited to taboo spaces: "[That] which belongs to a separate, forbidden and inviolable domain (in contrast to the profane) and constitutes the object of a feeling of religious reverence" (p. 2018), citing the sanctuary and the temple as sacred edifices. But not all sacred spaces are entirely separate, forbidden domains. The space of the Christian Orthodox church, for example – the comparison can be extended to Egyptian or Buddhist temples, too – is characterized from west to east by successive limitations of the number of the persons who can enter it, the most severe being in connection with the altar, which, nonetheless, is not an 'inviolable space'. This connection of the sacred to interdictions on its use gives it much too restrictive a meaning, one, which contradicts some of the examples of sacred spaces provided by the dictionary.

The Oxford English Reference Dictionary (1996) provides a more reserved variant: the sacred is (i) exclusively dedicated or appropriated to some deity or a religious purpose; (ii) hallowed by religious association; (iii) related to religion, used for religious purposes (p. 1270). The dictionary narrows the meaning of the sacred to its association with religion and does

not define a territory of the sacred, but one set aside (consecrated) as sacred by man in relation to the rituals of his religion.

Much more definitely – and, in comparison with the previous definition, less ‘cautious’ in the analogies it makes – *The Concise Oxford Thesaurus* tells us that the synonyms of the word ‘sacred’ are “a sacred place, holy, blessed, blest, hallowed, consecrated, sanctified, sacrosanct, inviolable, unimpeachable, invulnerable, protected, defended, secure, safe, unthreatened” (p. 699); its antonyms are “profane, secular, temporal”. From its antonyms we may infer that sacred space is not just a special type of space, being independent of time and therefore of history. *The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language* narrows down the matter of the sacred to religion, providing only one alternative, “holy”.

The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (1992) also offers us the origin of the term: the Latin *sacrare*, to devote, dedicate to a divinity, with *sacer* as adjective (consecrated, holy), and the related *sancire*, *sanctus* (p. 781). Equivalent verbs in Romance languages are the French *sacrer*, the Portuguese *sagrar*, and the Italian *sacrare*.

In his book *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (German original, 1926; Romanian translation, 1992) Rudolf Otto uses the term ‘*numinous*’ in connection with the sacred. In this way, he intends to account for the necessary presence of the god and to show that this concept, this *a priori* category (Ott, 1992, 165) of interpretation and evaluation, “exists as such only in the religious field” (p. 12). The shuddering, frightful, fascinating effect of grasping this *mysterium tremendum* (pp. 20–34); the energy and *majestas* (absolute power) associated with its manifestation, and the colossal, already described in

spatial terms – all these things are consequences of the numinous as manifest in the world.

According to Otto's definitions, thirty years later Eliade introduced – with considerably more nuances – a few standard definitions of the sacred and of sacred space in *The Sacred and the Profane* that would eventually permeate his entire work (although they can already be found in his Romanian study on Babylonian alchemy). Synthesising Eliade's ideas we may infer that the sacred, the dissembling, the radically other, reality of a different order, a break, and an irruption into 'lower' reality: "the first definition that can be given of the sacred is that it is opposed to the profane" (Eliade, 1992, 13). The sacred appears as a hierophany which at the same time makes the indifferent object into "something else, without ceasing to be itself" (Eliade, 1992, 14). Since hierophany also involves the place of its irruption, sacred space becomes the first element to help define and then unveil the setting up of the sacred place.

In what follows, the phrase 'sacred space' is used in an attempt to describe the projection into our world of something situated in "an entirely different place" and which is "completely something else" or "an entirely other thing": the site of a radical, absolute otherness which appears in this world once, with a certain frequency, or which has established a communication channel between "various cosmic levels" (Eliade). Would it not be possible, if sacred space were a place of epiphany, to substitute the term 'sacred place'? In his work on the sites of the sacred Eliade speaks constantly of what seem to be the components of space: centre, axis, axle, navel, mountain, hearth. It goes without saying that, after using the futuristic expression 'wormhole', which presupposes a point-like location in space and also the possibility of a passage

beyond, our discussion cannot be limited to a surface. The sacred is a profound quality of space, a vertical profundity whose projection is the place.

For Eliade, sacred space is therefore a ground of qualitative discontinuity, something opposed to profane, homogenous, and neutral space (note here the similarity between Heidegger's ideas of space and Eliade's); sacred space is a foundation and fixed point in men's lives, a place marked by an obvious hierophany (of the sort seen by Jacob), or merely by a worrisome sign of the profane world which, if not emerging by itself, can, as we have already seen, be called forth. In this 'conjuring up', we may observe a suspension of the 'logical' rules of the profane world, so making possible apparently random action in respect of those 'down there'. The choice of the deity, which is then marked on the ground. Eliade insists on a sacred space defined by an irradiating centre (omphalos, axis, mountain, altar).

Because Eliade's study is exemplary and in many respects still valid, I shall focus on a sacred space whose physical traits are visible – that is, on that space which is basically, if not exclusively, defined by its limits: *lucus* (the sacred forest), and by its regulation: *Raum* (the space prepared in order to set up camp), in an attempt to show how the 'diffuse' sacred of the filial couple *lucus–Raum* both permits and makes room for the central idea of the present paper, which is that sacred space exists also as a 'trajectory' in smooth space and not only as something fixed, stable, and final.

Moreover, in the case study of the 'clearing' I shall show how the established place of the settlement, consecrated for its stability, is nearly always the end of a migration trajectory; in other words, neither sacred space nor the place of a settlement with a certain degree of permanence are given from

the first; they are rather discovered at the end or during movement. Mobility precedes stability in the history of settlements and subsequently doubles it in order to become, in most recent times, once again a privileged instance of habitation/dislodgment and even of sacred space. After discovering that not even the planets are originally fixed in their attraction to the centre of the solar system,⁵ but have rather entered their current trajectories after migrations that consecrated their shape and movement, the association of sacred space with some form of dynamism no longer seems so dramatically opposed to the traditional, central-static conception.

Eliade is obviously – if we confront Heidegger and Deleuze – on the side of stability or of fixity through the consecration of sacred space:

when camping is no longer provisional as with nomads but stable as with sedentary people, it involves a vital decision that commits the existence [? involves, or puts at stake the existence...] of the entire community (Eliade, 1992, 33–34),

although it expects from a place of habitation at least that it is sanctified, “no matter what the structure of the traditional society”. This accounts for why Eliade’s examples seem to concentrate on ends of trajectories, termini of migration: the Scandinavians who deforested Iceland, the conquerors of already inhabited space (Eliade, 1992, 31), the Muslim dervishes (Eliade, 1992, 27), the German tribes, and naturally, Jacob himself.

⁵ Renu Malhotra, ‘Migrating Planets’, *Scientific American*, September 1999, pp. 46–53.

What can these definitions of the sacred and the sacred space that shelters it tell us about Jacob's story? Some dictionary definitions limit themselves to defining the sacred as a quality transferred, conferred by man upon the object, space, or place, that is, to the recognition of something as sacred. Moreover, they refer not to the moment Jacob discovers the place endowed with exceptional properties, but to the moment of its consecration as a sacred place. A place is sacred only to the extent to which – and after which – it has been declared/confirmed as a sacred place. It is man's action upon it – in two movements: discovery and consecration – that changes its status, isolates it from the uncircumscribed, indifferent space, and, as we have seen, suspends it from history. There is an interval that precedes consecration when a 'place' is revealed to Jacob as sacred. According to the dictionaries, it would seem that, since the unveiling of the sacred is the privilege of the few, it is wiser to let ourselves be guided exclusively by them and to assert what is convenient: for common mortals, there is no other way of putting themselves in the sacred space, of seeing it, than to have it consecrated as sacred by those who possess the gift of revelation.

The definitions based on consecration seem to suggest a weakening of the meaning of sacred space: at the extreme, something may become sacred only if it is consecrated; the hallowing seems to cover any doubts regarding the qualities which led to the election of that place as sacred before being consecrated. This reservation concerning the 'sacred *qua* sacred', which we may account for in terms of the sometimes excessive rigour of linguistics, can raise the problem of the voluntary and erroneous gesture, of random institution through manipulation of the ability to consecrate spaces as sacred spaces, an ability which the one who has it – upon whom it has been bestowed – can abuse.

The dictionary definitions do not warn us of the possibility – which is a form of *hybris* – of enthroning false sacred places; moreover, it leaves us defenseless in the face of such a possibility. It is not up to just anyone to unveil, to make visible such sites of the sacred or to consecrate them as such; those unto a descent from Christ and the Apostles – this privilege has been granted of not making mistakes and/or not abusing this gift must be all the more cautious. When it seems that they are not acquitting themselves, as they should, however, what strategies can we use in our defense? We should have some, since in sacred space, within its radius and under its protection, we find shelter.

More precisely: sacred space is made up of a place where the epiphanic event unfolds and also where the spatial aura is situated on the vertical – the qualitative axis of space – of the ‘tunnel’ in whose dynamics lies the tie between what is ‘below’ from what is ‘above’ or, in general, ‘beyond’. Sacred space is then the place of projection, the projecting rays, and the aura of the event projected. Jerusalem is a standard example of sacred space: it is the mundane projection of the heavenly Jerusalem and it ‘exists’ only in combination with the latter. In terms of a *theory of ideas* (in Platonic terms),⁶ sacred space would be the territory occupied by the ‘copy’, but also the space – no matter how hard to imagine this might be in physical terms – between the ‘copy’ and the ‘idea’.

The temple is an example of standard sacred space: it contains, decomposed into ‘primal factors’:

- (i) A site unveiled or consanctated as sacred, upon which a church or temple is built.

⁶ The Bible is the privileged territory of practical ‘in situ’ judgement concerning the relationship between ‘original’/transcendent and ‘copy’.

- (ii) An interior space, made sacred through 'contamination' with the presence of [the Name of] the Lord 'inside', at consecration.
- (iii) A transcendental model (the temple of heavenly Jerusalem) who's ever more faithful protection is desired (or should be).
- (iv) A vertical communication channel between 'original' and 'copy', which the celebration rituals in the temple are supposed to keep open; in the case of the church, this channel is the divine eye that inspects the sacred space.⁷

⁷ Some clergymen and Christian Orthodox men of culture insist that Romanian Orthodox churches are small because, by virtue of a kind of 'domesticity', in this way sacred space makes it possible to celebrate better the symbolical habitation among men of Jesus. However, this limits the ascending and transcendental verticality of the sacred space. A similar effect can be noted in respect of the insistence on the 'sofianism' of the Christian Orthodox sacred space which, by means of vaults and cupolas, is reflected back onto itself, like a Mobius strip, the church space becoming interior space. The presence of Jesus painted in the cupola that crowns the tower is not a 'closure of the vertical axis' so that the space 'boomerangs', curving onto itself; on the contrary, it is a form of symbolic visualisation of the destination of the vertical axis which connects the 'here' (the 'naos' or nave) and the 'there' (heaven). Catholic churches point in the same direction but seem to leave open the finality of the ascendancy, so inviting humility and also speculation. The sacred space of the Christian Orthodox church, and especially the cupola on the naos, makes visible the vertical component of space, defining it more vigorously as a 'hyphen' between two clearly defined points, not curbing it in any way or sending it back defeated. Elegant as a metaphor, 'sophianic space' ought perhaps to be relegated to the philosophy of culture and not taken up by architectural practice.

Sacred Space – Public Place – Private Space

The site should be on an eminence conspicuous enough for men to look up and see goodness enthroned and strong enough to command the adjacent quarters of the city.

Aristotle, *Politics*, 122; 28–30 (trans. Barker)

The place should be such as to have *epiphaneia* so as to see goodness fulfilled and strengthened, so that the regions of the city might come to be.

Aristotle, *Politics*, 122; 28–30 (trans. I. Kagis McEwan, 1997, 88)

The quotation from Aristotle, translated by Barker, that I chose as motto for this section was interpreted by Irad Malkin as proof of the fact that, in Antiquity, just as Alberti would urge one millennium later, the selection of a construction site – particularly for a temple – was made according to the special characteristics (here preeminence) which recommended it as a chosen place. On the other hand, the commentary on and translation of the Aristotelian fragment by Kagis McEwan insists not on the special spatial traits of the place (the surface) where the epiphany occurs, but on the presence of the deity as the reason for choosing the construction site.

The two interpretations derive from two different scientific traditions. The first author is an archaeologist and bases his argument on familiar translations ‘without further ado’. The second author comes from the field of classical philology and subjects each part of the original to questioning, resulting in a new interpretation of the text. We are interested in the fact that each of the two interpretations answers the question: ‘How is the sacred space selected or found?’. Their divergence

suggests the existence of two different classes of natural territory on which sacred space can be situated:

- (i) One which is clearly distinct from neighbouring spaces.
- (ii) One whose location and extent can be revealed only by the chosen one, and whose natural appearance would otherwise not recommend it as being different from profane space.

The former, in respect of which the sacred is visible (also in its natural (physical) description can, in turn, be defined in two ways: (1a) by means of its limits (a 'clearing') and (1b) by means of its centre (*omphalos*, axis, tree, mountain). Presenting the second class of locations in which sacred space may be situated presupposes that the gestures of the one who discovers it has to conjure up either or both types described in the first class. Sacred places similar to that discovered by Jacob needs to be brought into the light; its needs inaugural gestures which mark the centre and/or its outer limits.

Setting up a city on sacred territory, however, no matter what class it may be situated in, presupposes the ritualistic establishment of both signs – that is, those marking the center and the limits – no matter whether they already exist in that place or not. In other words, the character of a sacred place, turned into a dwelling place or locality, is stabilized by the rituals of marking the limit, the centre, and the interior geometry of the territory 'saved' this way (see Heidegger's 'Building Dwelling Thinking' on the definition of limit).

'Sacred space' is the essential manner of appearance of a terrain in which both the public place and the private space find room or derive their substance. Building in the realm of epiphany has a rather long history. Habitation is thus situated

on the territory of the sacred. In terms of our definition of the latter (see above) I posit the following:

- (i) Sacred space is a prior form of territory pro-posed for games of visibility; the sacredness of this space precedes those of the public place and the private space; the emergence of the di-pole; public place/private space; presupposes the presence of a form of sacred space in that place or in its proximity.
- (ii) Subsequently, after the establishment of these two terms, the sacred space negotiates – weakening it – their presupposed dichotomy.
- (iii) The Sacred Space, time and time again, brought into light via the ritual, is an absolute form of maintenance in time, of the self-reproduction of the two aspects of socialized space. The sacred space must be fixed, stabilized, and, subsequently, time and time again, remembered in order that its role as support, as substratum of socialized space might be preserved.⁸
- (iv) Memory (collective or individual) – whose monuments (traces–cenotaph) are outlined/elevated on the spot as a

⁸ For more details on the monument and its social role – which is similar to that of sacred space – see the article by Cara Armstrong and Karen Nelson in *Architronic* (www.saed.kent.edu/Architronic/v2n205, September 1993) concerning the relationship between ritual and monument in the context of myth. The ritual and the monument can embody the essence of events. Monuments can provide a site for a form of permanence in a landscape and imprint events in collective memory. By means of ritual, the landscape can be turned into an operator. Ritual conditions the reading of the monument and of the place through the body and through memory. Monuments remind, warn, and ‘suture’ [‘sew together’]; they provide public places for recognition, reunion, and mourning.

consequence of foundation rituals, cyclical remaking, separation, revisiting – is the principal means of maintaining sacred space as a territory of the sacred. These *traces* or *cenotaphs* fix and order space around them/inside themselves as an interpenetration of regions of visibility.

- (v) At the extreme, public places marked out by monuments as sites of memory can be – and have been over the centuries – also identified as sacred spaces. The site of a battle – a major event likely to consecrate a public place – can become a territory housing a temple. After all, Heidegger warns us, the statue of the god – which is the god itself – is dedicated to it by the conqueror (Heidegger, 1995, 67). This was what the Romanian prince Stephen the Great did when he consecrated the public places of his battles as sacred spaces by building churches on the sites.⁹ The sacred space makes a better imprint on the collective memory than a monument erected in a public place and is therefore more ‘efficient’ as regards conservation within the sacred space of the memory of the exceptional and unique event.

We have dwelt on the Biblical text in order to construct two different scenarios of what might have happened after the departure of the one who discovered – and the meaning of the term ‘*aletheic*’ must not be ignored in the light of what follows – a sacred space. The fragment from the Bible to which I have referred is also significant for understanding (i) the nature

⁹ The more so as the battles were mostly waged against the infidel, and so had the character of a ‘holy war’. Consequently, the victims of such a war can be assimilated to martyrs, and the battle place to a potentially sacred space, hallowed by that very event.

of the sacred space; (ii) its physical and temporal 'origins' (that is, the manner in which it is presented to us, a manner that presupposes a beginning); (iii) the mechanism by which the sacred space connects with the space organized by man, as something prior to it; and finally, (iv) the relations established between the sacred space and the public place, and between sacred space and private space.

The question is whether inside the di-pole public place/private space there exists a 'no-man's-land', a territory where the fringes of the two ways of arranging space interact. I maintain that after the establishment of a locality and, in time, of a settlement, sacred space weakens the presupposed dichotomy between public place and private space. The sacred permeates and informs both forms of 'spacing' of the events established by the real of visibility. From the point of view of its spatiality, sacred space is either fertile absence in relation to the excess pertaining to the 'wild presence' from which it is cut (*Lichtung* as clearing seen as *lucus* – sacred forest in Amoroso's text), or, on the contrary, an affirmation in a landscape defined by the absence of attributes or of physical landmarks, an *anomie* (the wilderness, the desert from the example given at the beginning).

In any case, a sacred space is a place exposed to divine inspection – as Heidegger put it, "under the firmament" (Heidegger, 1995, 180), left "before the divine ones". For these "divine ones", sacred space is a pro-posed place, put before them, beneath the firmament. Both public place and private space can find room in sacred space. The public place can take shape anywhere: for example, the battle place was not selected by virtue of its sacredness and yet it was a public place. One specification can be made here: *stable* public places, those where events occur regularly and are even

ritualised, presuppose the existence of a sacred space as a strong argument for ‘enspacement’ on or in it or in direct relation to events of meeting, negotiation, exchange, and decision, all based on mutual visibility and which barely define a stable public place. That being said, we can nuance Heidegger’s assertion that “mortals inhabit to the extent they rescue the earth”, to the extent they “pull it out of danger” (the one presented by the chaos produced by the lack of traits), and, the philosopher goes on, because they would “liberate it unto its own essence”. Habitation by mortals as a protection of the “fourfold” consists therefore in “saving the earth, protecting the heavens, waiting for the divine, and guiding the mortals” (Heidegger, 1995, 181).

The example of the temple in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ and all the arguments in ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’ lead us to the following assertion: the abodes mortals erect to inhabit, while protecting the “fourfold”, are all situated in the realm of sacred space. Not just particular constructions are located in sacred space, but “all building that takes care of growth” (Heidegger, 1995, 179) is in the realm of the sacred and, at the extreme (for example, in the temple), makes it visible in an explicit manner. Again, dwelling in Heidegger’s sense – that is, making room for Being and protecting it to attain its essence – is habitation in the intensity of sacred space.

I have mentioned intensity. This is possible – as Heidegger tells us, and in his wake all theorists of the phenomenology of architecture, historians of religion, and anthropologists – because sacred space is (de)limited. The Greek temple recalled by Heidegger “shuts in itself the figure of the deity and in this concealment it makes it emanate into the sacred space via the open hall of the columns”. Moreover, “owing to the temple, the deity is present in the temple”, an assertion that seems to

confirm across the millennia the wisdom of the Jews who 'stabilized' through the Temple the past unpredictability of the emergence and presence of Yahweh in their midst. The filling of the entire space of the temple with the expression of divinity proves that it was necessary as a receptacle of the sacred; even more, as a resonance box, amplifying the effects of the presence of the deity.¹⁰

This presence of the deity is, in itself, the unfolding and delimitation of the space as sacred (Heidegger, 1995, 65).

In what way does the dichotomy threatening to become installed between the opening (public place) and the cloister (private space) weaken the sacred space? How does the sacred space stabilise their most radical meaning? The public place stabilizes in time by means of ritual and therefore by preserving the visibility of the sacred space sacredness. "The place admits the fourfold and orders it" (Heidegger, 1995, 189). Systematisation therefore means an optimisation, "a location in the open" of the intuited sacred space. You cannot establish a sacred space if you are not chosen, but you can improve its public visibility.

The gesture that follows immediately after this "melioration" (*einrichtet* is translated as "ordering" on page 189), this approaching and accommodating of the sacred space, is that of taking it under protection: "The place is a *Hut* of the fourfold or, as the same word would have it, *Huis, Haus*, a place of shelter" (Heidegger, 1995, 189). After having been

¹⁰ The cup in the poem by C.F. Meyer, quoted by Heidegger, and the sacrificial cup the description of which strikingly reminds us of the void at the middle of the wheel towards which the spokes go, celebrated in the *Tao-te Ching*, are obviously privileged metaphors for Heidegger.

accommodated – or, more precisely, after having been approached in such a way as to be supported by mortals, the sacred space (be)comes a “home” for dwelling. The place (best described in terms of its extent) becomes a domestic/interior space (*Hut*), best described with its surrounding, by the fact that it can contain and, by giving shelter, protect. In the realm of the sacred space and only here does the place of public exhibition become the sole location appropriate for giving shelter. It is here that is founded again, detached from its weak (and therefore criticisable) linguistic basis, the connection between dwelling and neighbourhood. Keeping under control through building in the way I expose myself (or not) to the visibility of the others, but preserving through the windows of the house my visual control at least over the immediately proximate territory I domesticate the public place for its own protection – I change its attributes so that, situated on its territory it may be constrained by the control I exercise over the portion that I inhabit, to become a private space. Dwelling is therefore, in conformity with Heidegger’s thinking, exclusively habitation together on an insular territory, pro-posed and supported by its sacredness.

The ritualisation of the experience of sacred space is also sheltered by Heidegger in his apparently insignificant household in the Beskid Mountains (that is, in the peasant vernacular house, *par excellence*). In the insistence with which the philosopher speaks of the unity of the “fourfold” we discover the daily, homespun presence of the sacred:

The house did not ignore the corner dedicated to the Lord behind the common table; holy places have been set up in the rooms for the birth and the ‘tree of death’, as a coffin is called there, foreshadowing thus for all the ages

of life under a single roof, the pattern of their passage in time (Heidegger, 1995, 191–92).

The corner of the icons and the candles – the corner of prayers – is situated opposite the entrance where the observer is placed: in other words, in the profoundness of private space, interwoven with it.

Every event of life is put in space in a sacred context: the territory of domesticity is hallowed (so the sacred is again invoked, called again to the surface from the profundity/height where it keeps vigil) through successive rituals – choosing the location of the house, baptism, marriage, death, daily prayers at various hours of the day, before and after meals. These rituals occur with variable regularity, but all have a similar purpose: reinvestment with the sacred or, more correctly, remembrance of its presence, invocation of the stability of the sacred character of habitation.

Disposable sacred spaces

Let us now try to put together everything we have talked about so far and attempt to endow the whole with a minimal theoretical consistency.

The most important quality of the sacred space is its location.¹¹ It is local, distributed in relation to physical space. It is not the territory as a whole that can be sacred but privileged (and therefore rare) areas of it, the rarest being those identified by man as such. The sacred is not a molar attribute, but a molecular one. Despite the ubiquity of the divine glance, under the inspection of which the entire terrestrial area and physical space in its entirety should be situated, it seems that there exist

¹¹ Location, stable settlement in a (de)limited part of space.

only 'vents' through which the sacred overflows into our world. This phenomenon, applied to the manner in which ancient cultures regarded space, was adequately explained by Eliade: it seems quite different from contemporary notions, however, especially Deleuze's smooth space of the nomads. Furthermore, where we would like to annihilate the dichotomy between the public and the private, Foucault enthrones another: to the "theoretical desanctification of space" (Foucault, 1986, 23) which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he opposes what Carey calls "a refractory survival" (Carey, 1998, 299) of "the hidden presence of the sacred" (Foucault, 1986, 23). This perpetuation of a "space fully loaded with qualities is also perfectly fantastic". Foucault sees it situated through others of the same type, in the dichotomy between Public Space and Sacred Space (Foucault, 1986, 23). In the tension of the opposition between disjointed places, the uncertain gesture of crossing various spaces seems to hold, but it is not the sacred in the sense of the presence/presentiment of the divine, but the sacred in its "uncanny" meaning of worrisome incomprehensibility.

In what follows I would like to open up sacred space in terms of some of the other forms it may take, which are more stable and not at all unhistorical – to forms which are open, on the one hand, to instability (and even dynamics) and on the other to evanescence. From the very beginning I would insist on the fact that both the sacred space identified by Jacob and that described by Deleuze and Guattari are to be found in the wilderness. But if marking the place of an epiphany, commemorating it through rituals performed on the chosen spot, are elements designating such a stable sacred space, nomads also have privileged points, landmarks on the road of migration. The rituals take place at wider intervals of time dictated by the rhythm of the migration and the uncertainty of

a return to the place. Usually, however, the monument and/or the trace/cenotaph which moves together with the one migrating makes up for memory's longing for stability. In fact, with the exception of Athens, the ancient Greek city-states emerged "with the construction of extra-urban sanctuaries by migratory populations" (Kagis McEwan, 1997, 89), which verifies once again not only the theory of sacredness as a prior condition of the foundation of a settlement, but also the one that I will develop in my discussion on the "clearing", which regards the original "instability" of the settlement not as atemporal but as a destination of migrations and colonisations.

The representations of the sacred--such as icons, for example--find their place in a temple, but can also exist, in motion, in the trajectory of its movement. More and more, the representations of sacred and even consecrated, hallowed spaces are not limited to the church and the house. The triptych, folded, can be taken with you and unfolded during a stop; small 'icons', of the type carried in wallets, on the computer at our working place and the dashboard of our motor cars are all memories of the sacred, which are deterritorialised and recontextualised somewhere else, where- and whenever eyes and prayers happen to address them. A visit to the Cernica Monastery is impressive today not only because of the charm of the location, but also because of the considerable number of new cars taken there to be blessed. Beyond the obvious humour of the situation, it should be regarded (or consecrated) as a sacred space, even if mobile, and even if it proves (and promotes) the diminution of stability, of the 'traditional' location, of the sacred space, a process to which the clergy innocently consents.

The sacred space itself can be deterritorialised according to need, like the small prayer rug that each Muslim unrolls and lays down anywhere, facing Mecca, at time of prayer. By

this minimal gesture, the sacred space – evanescent – is limited to an apparition in time and space by the duration and location of the particular prayer.

The tent erected during papal visits and the *via regia* which leads to it have a daring architecture: their aesthetic qualities as ephemeral sacred spaces are worthy of study in their own right. The dynamic position and orientation of the altar in the Catholic Church since the second Vatican Council also indicates the weakening of the location of traditional sacred space, having been moved from the eastern extreme of the building, facing east (that is, God), to the centre of the church, facing the parishioners. Even the Christian Orthodox churches, once extremely strict in their orientation – the altar pointing east – are today built, in consideration of their urban setting, in various other positions.

In other cultures, there are other privileged examples of the becoming – in time – of sacred spaces, again addressing the problem of historicity that one of the earlier definitions denied: the Ise Temple (Japan), for example, is rebuilt every 15 years, always in wood and always according to the same design. The temple itself moves from one location to another (nearby), after the construction of its new building has been completed. It is not only neo-Protestant churches which seem to consider anywhere chosen as a place to pray as appropriate for that reason alone and so as potentially sacred. The crisis of the Church since 1989 and, within this, the '[sacred] spatial' crisis, has moved religious ceremonies outside and even to other places. These days, almost all the older Christian Orthodox churches build in their grounds a belfry for services at which the number of the faithful exceeds the capacity of what used to be considered the traditional (and exclusive) sacred space. For the Greek Catholic church, however, the

situation appears to be much more dramatic. One episode that I witnessed at Sighetu Marmatiei in 1995 seems particularly revealing in this regard: a Greek Catholic mass was held not in the church but outside, right in front of the monument of a Soviet soldier. The ‘gallows humour’ of the location was in fact a drama taking place before my very eyes and also the sign of a change of mentality, of a de-limitation of the traditional sacred space, in the sense of making it more comprehensive, less ‘inviolable’ and ‘forbidden’, as our dictionary definition had it. In fact, as the experience of my visits to the United States proved to me, almost any territory can be recovered as (or used instead of) a sacred space,¹² one and the same location being used by two different denominations (Orthodox and Lutherans in Queens, NY, and in Rochester, NY).

And why shouldn’t it? After all, the delocalisation of the sacred and its reterritorialisation along a migration trajectory

¹² Unfortunately, the founders of the Christian Orthodox church, especially those of the day, particularly at the head with those backing the construction of the Cathedral for the Redemption of the Nation, seem keen to abuse, as frivolous, this ‘weakening’ of the significance of the sacred space. Any road juncture, park, or square chosen for reasons of size and situation relative to the centre of a given locality have been used as *topoi* of the sacred. I myself designed and supervised the construction of several Christian Orthodox places and often found myself shocked by the lack of sensitivity of the clergy in this matter. For instance, at Urziceni, a last-minute decision led to the church not being situated on the holy ground marked with a cross, where the altar should have been placed. I wonder if, after the conflicts surrounding the building of the Cathedral for the Redemption of the Nation, this particular choice of sacred place will in fact be observed (enhanced by the Pope’s kiss!). Some might argue that the final consecration service can partly set right such *faux pas*, but the question remains: by what criteria do we identify a place as being sacred today?

finds a most revealing expression in the way the divine word, written in the Tablets of the Law, was moved together with the Jews during the Exodus, on a long and winding trajectory that united an 'origin', Mount Sinai, with a 'final' destination, the Holy Tribune in the Temple at Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the sacred was present – distributed – not by virtue of a fixed spot, but in a location relative to the location of the Jews themselves: the shrine and Yahweh himself were with them all the time, in their midst. The sacred space is therefore a trajectory rather than a place.

Monuments, Cenotaphs, Memorials, or 'Semi-Sacred Places'

We encounter such fractures in 'smooth space' as, for example, memorials marking the spot of a fatal accident. Naturally, not all the monuments make visible a sacred place, not all of them mark epiphanies like the one established in the wilderness by Jacob. Consequently, not all of them are of interest in terms of the economy of this text. However, the mechanism of establishment – and especially that of the perpetuation of these memorials – invokes, if not explicitly then obliquely, or at least in the subtext, the presence of the sacred. Interested readers might like to consult a text addressing the question of temporary monuments 'Mourning in Protest: Spontaneous Memorials and the Sacralization of Public Space' by Harriet F. Senie (in *Harvard Design Magazine* [Autumn 1999]), which is primarily an attempt at an accommodation in the social context of the matter of "spontaneous and perishable monuments", such as the one set up at the entrance of the Alma Tunnel in Paris, near the crash involving Princess Diana and Dodi Fayed. Such agglomerations of mourning messages, of love and protest combined, are a 'vernacular'

form of establishing a special type of monument by physically marking a place: that of someone's violent disappearance.

A grave of someone who died 'somewhere else' and whose resting place cannot be located or visited (a battlefield, a common or an unknown grave in a concentration camp, the sea, or a mysterious plane accident, like the one involving Antoine de Saint Exupery) is one such monument–cenotaph. That these are a 'soft' monuments-cenotaphs, sites of the immediate memory, is proven by their extinction in time, on the one hand, and their extension to events other than those connected to the violent death in question: in Seattle in 1993, at the marina for private yachts (where many people live, their yachts being moored in 'streets' at numbered 'addresses'), I saw a memorial dedicated to Elvis Presley, whose vessel must have birthed there at some time. The character of the memorable event, which took place on that spot, appears diluted, however, since it is not the sign of a sacrifice.

Such monuments-cenotaphs are further weakened by the imprecision of their location. The grave is a *monumentum* – also etymologically – since it includes the remains of a deceased person. But situated as it is – for good reasons of traffic safety – *near* the Alma tunnel and not *in* the tunnel, at the spot where the accident took place, the memorial-cenotaph of Princess Diana is weakened twice over, because we know that she actually died in the hospital. In any case, other temporal memorials to her have arisen in other places, associated for other reasons with the Princess (at the gates of Kensington Palace, for example). The monument-cenotaph tries to solve the problem of the failure to locate the place of death, of the absence of a precise spot for mourning the deceased.

The separation from the place of death and that of the burial, and the marking of the two, seem to affect only roads;

other sites of violent death are not so intensely marked. Sadness and mourning must be located, directed to a fixed spot, which, by being captured, becomes condensed.¹³ The trajectories of our movements, because they are territories of instability and poorly tattooed with the signs of human presence, situated somewhere between two *civitas* (at extremes) and chaos (on both sides) make somewhat necessary, by the very poor signalling of their humanization, landmarks of memory whose superior form is the roadside altar. The memory of the departed person is thus situated (settled) *here* (in the cemetery) and *there* (on the side of the road where the person met his or her death); more precisely, this memory is situated on the trajectory that unites the two forms of location, while subjecting them to a certain tension. The first is a space of the body, the other a place of the soul.

The cemetery is a stable territory which, by its proximity to *civitas*, allows the ritual to be performed regularly, while the place of the accident is often – especially after a long period of time and especially if far from the tomb – visited only in passing, at long intervals. There are also opposite situations when the cenotaph is in the proximity of the habitation and therefore in the most privileged position to attract the ritual, while the ‘real’ tomb (which contains the corpse) is remote, inaccessible, or unknown (battlefield, concentration camp).

The opposition is not between a local vision of the sacred space and the fluid one of smooth space, but only when on the sacred territory or in its proximity/surrounding the premises

¹³ In this context, I recommend two extremely interesting studies: Michel Lauwers, “Le cimetière dans le Moyen Age latin. Lieu sacre, saint et religieux” (*Annales* 5 [1999]), and “Modernism and the Zionist Uncanny. Reading the Old Cemetery in Tel Aviv”, *Representations* 69 (Winter 1999).

of the Private Space are organized, of a settlement with a certain time duration. The presence of the habitation on the sacred space separates it from any possible recovery of smooth space. Defined as a territory that is (made?) sacred with a view to the offer of habitation, the sacred space becomes synonymous with *Raum*. At this point, I must emphasise that it is not the fact that on/in the sacred space there occur 'enspacements' of mutual visibility that account for the public place established there, but establishment – that is, stabilization – with a view to habitation which separates the sacred space from the smooth space. The latter also has sacred sites in which the performance of a ritual triggers a public place. The smooth space, however, does not contain settlements with a degree of permanence around or on the territory of the sacred space. By pitching camp, the nomad does not 'settle down', but merely 'halts his advance'. The camp is not a locality, but a stop, leaving only a weak impression of the trajectory of the migration, one which is not stabilized even if repeated.

Building successive churches at the same location accounts for the phenomenon of sedimentation – the 'archiving' of the sacred by means of the memory of the place. (Christian Norberg Schulz's *stabilitas loci* acquires a special significance in this context.) It seems that the miraculous space is never sufficiently visible and therefore also helped, from time to time, by the degradation of the old church. A founder aware of the sacredness of the place begins to enhance it through an even more important built presence, a presence ever more adequate to the exceptional character of the settlement. Let us remember that the science of constantly improving sacred abodes meant the end of Master Manole. In the assuredness with which he said that he could build another monastery, more beautiful than his predecessor, at any time, there is not only the pride of

the creator, but also recognition of the 'evolutionary' character of church-making. It is not an option, but a necessity: the next one must be superior to the previous, in an endless circle of accommodating buildings to the sacred space that they proclaim. To this end, Master Manole does not seem to spare any effort; on the contrary, as soon as the conditions permit it, or the previous church deteriorates, remaking necessarily means an 'improvement' on the previous form. If it was made of wood and burned down, it is 'translated' into stone and, given the possibilities of the material, extended.

The notion of 'historical monument', of a building halted in its becoming, is a very new one: in cultures still permeated by the traditions that 'go with' the building (as in rural parts of Romania) it remains unassimilated to this day.¹⁴

Conclusions

The sacred space is *the interface between the unappropriated territory of nature and the human settlement*. Heidegger's clearing (*Lichtung*) thus becomes a particular case of the sacred space described by Amoroso as *lucus a non lucendo*, namely, a sacred space described primarily in terms of its limits (the violently disordered forest); the other case of

¹⁴ It is difficult to understand and vehemently condemned by townspeople, why certain villagers in Transylvania abandoned their wooden churches – historic monuments – and built bigger ones, according to their needs (or aspirations – their image of themselves). Doubtless, this innocent, 'organicist' attitude is easier to understand in connection with a house, which is used as long as it is adequate to its purposes, and then replaced. The disappearance of the token does not mean the disappearance of the sacred place which is reiterated again and again. Attention must concentrate on the process, not its circumstantial (and, in the long run, ephemeral) avatars.

sacred space is 'composed' of a sacred space which is fixed or stabilized by a vertical spatial axis.

The Sacred Space exists in the *stable*, local, and *mobile posture* of a trajectory (a pilgrimage, for instance, or an 'Exodus'). Such a sacred space is visibly marked and celebrated (temple, monument, cenotaph) or is relegated to the dynamics of space (altar) and/or evanescence (temporary memorial). The first form of sacred space – the one spacing in a fixed place – is more stable because it has memory on its side, which reiterates, sediments, and thus makes topical its position.

The temple is a privileged example of such a sacred space, where its components of place and space are mutually confirmed and strengthened in their sacredness. The temple is a place 'intoxicated' with sacredness, a place characterised by an excess of sacredness, where the redundancy of its presence, the plethora of references to its presence or nature, represents the principle of its facade and decorative organization.

Nonetheless, in a locality situated on or in the proximity of the sacred space – whose territory is, in other words, informed by the sacred – the temple is not the only place where it becomes visible: *the house is another sacred space*, even situated – in terms of an ad-hoc evolutionary theory – before the temple, while the transformation of a church 'back' into a house still has an exceptional, somewhat profane air (other daring conversions today include shelters, asylums, and hospitals¹⁵). In light of Heidegger and Eliade's writings on dwelling, the relation between the house and the sacred seems one of mutual enforcement, whether or not the place of habitation is stable or temporary.

¹⁵ See the examples of churches converted into housing that I give in *Khora* (Ioan, 1999).

REZUMAT

În Biblie, unul dintre cele mai semnificative momente de după Geneză se referă nu atât la abilitatea fiului lui Adam de a funda orașe în care nu avea cine locui deocamdată,ⁱ cât la un vis a cărui urmare este un gest ziditor.ⁱⁱ Iată acest fragment veterotestamentar în întregime:

10. Iar Iacov ieșind din Beer-Seba s-a dus la Haran. 11. Ajungând la un loc, a rămas să doarmă acolo, căci asfințise soarele. Și luând una din pietrele locului aceluia și punându-și-o căpătâi, s-a culcat în locul acela. 12. Și a visat că parcă era o scară, sprijinită pe pământ, iar cu vârful atingea cerul; iar îngerii lui Dumnezeu se suiau și se pogorau pe ea. 13. Apoi s-a arătat Domnul în capul scării și l-a zis: „Eu sunt Domnul, Dumnezeul lui Avraam, tatăl tau, și Dumnezeul lui Isaac. Nu te teme! Pământul pe care dormi, ți-l voi da ție și urmașilor tăi. 14. Urmașii tăi vor fi mulți ca pulberea pământului și tu te vei întinde la apus și la răsărit, la miazănoapte și la miazăzi, și se vor binecuvânta întru tine și întru urmașii tăi toate neamurile pământului. 15. Iată, eu sunt cu tine și te voi păzi în orice cale vei merge; te voi întoarce în pământul acesta, și nu te voi lăsa până nu vei implini toate câte ți-am spus.”

16. Iar când s-a deșteptat din somnul său, Iacov a zis: „Domnul e cu adevărat în locul acesta și eu n-am știut!”

17 Și spăimântându-se Iacov, a zis: „Cât de înfricoșător (sic!) este locul acesta! Aceasta nu e alta fără numai casa

ⁱ Probabil, dată fiind singurătatea de atunci, Cain a făcut-o în felul în care Amfion, mai târziu, va fi zidit Teba?

ⁱⁱ El este invocat și de Mircea Eliade în cartea sa din 1957 *Das Heilige und das Profane* (ediția franceză Gallimard 1965), la pagina 26 din ediția românească de la editura Humanitas, 1992.

lui Dumnezeu, aceasta e poarta cerului!" 18. Apoi s-a sculat Iacov dis-de-diminează, a luat piatra ce și-o pusese căpătâi, a pus-o stâlp și a turnat pe vârful ei untdelemn. (sublinierea mea, A.I.) 19 Iacov a pus locului aceluia numele Betel, căci numai înainte cetatea aceea se numea Luz. 20 Și a făcut Iacov făgăduință zicând: „De va fi Domnul Dumnezeu cu mine și mă va povățui în calea aceea, în care merg eu astăzi, de-mi va da pâine să mănânc și haine să mă îmbrac, 21 și de mă voi întoarce sănătos la casa tatălui meu, atunci Domnul va fi Dumnezeul meu. 22 Iar piatra aceasta, pe care am pus-o stâlp, va fi pentru mine casa lui Dumnezeu și din toate câte îmi vei da tu mie, a zecea parte o voi da ție.”ⁱⁱⁱ (sublinierea mea, A.I.)

Dormind în pustie „la un loc” ales doar pentru că, asfințind soarele, trebuia să se oprească undeva, Iacov visează că exact în acel loc (și, subînțelegem, prin chiar țeasta lui străpunsă de vis, devreme ce, ne relevă profunzimea – probabil involuntară – a traducerii: „s-a culcat în acel loc” sublinierea mea, A.I.) se deschide cerul: îngerii urcă și coboară chiar pe acolo, apoi însuși Dumnezeu se arată „în capul scării”. Mai înainte de orice, trebuie remarcat cât de „eliadesc” este spațiul sacru al poveștii noastre, perfect camuflat în profan. Anonim și lipsit de trăsături care să-l evidențieze, adresa lui geografică este „la un loc” și alegerea lui de către Iacov pare aleatorie. Eliade însuși arată că este nevoie de un semn pentru a distinge că acolo este un spațiu sacru, iar „când nu se manifestă nici un semn în împrejurimi, el este provocat” (Eliade, 1992, 27).

Suntem aici atât de departe de acel „loc mândru” cerut de Alberti pentru așezarea unui templu, un loc „vizibil din orice direcție” (Leon Battista Alberti, 1988, 195). Se nasc atunci în

ⁱⁱⁱ Facerea 28, 10-22, p. 40, *Biblia*, București, 1968 .

raport cu situarea spațiului sacru două întrebări la care fragmentul nu răspunde:

a) este Iacov un *agent al descoperirii* Spațiului sacru? Adică: este el atras în mod inconștient către acel loc datorită faptului că însuși este un ales și, deci, dotat probabil cu o sensibilitate specială de a intui unde se află dintotdeauna un loc de tăria Spațiului sacru, chiar dacă neștiind să explice cum o face („Domnul e cu adevărat în locul acesta și eu n-am știut!”)? Subînțeles în această întrebare este faptul că descoperirea acestui Spațiu sacru și prezența lui acolo sunt două lucruri diferite: Spațiul sacru există „dintotdeauna/deja” acolo, sau, oricum, la scara ființei umane, precede devoalarea prezenței sale în lumea noastră.

b) A doua întrebare urmează dacă nu suntem siguri de răspunsul primeia: nu cumva zeul binevoiește să *instituiască*, ca prerogativă a puterilor sale, „un loc”, oricât de umil și de insignifiant ar fi acesta, și, arătându-se unui supus ales de El, *instituiască* Spațiul sacru și ne retrace astfel orice șansă de a putea „descoperi”? În subtextul acestei a doua întrebări este faptul că instituirii de către zeu a Spațiului sacru îi corespunde în timp „descoperirea” lui de către cel ales să o facă; că, deci, Spațiul sacru „începe”, are o origine temporală și că nici o configurație geografică și spațială nu este mai favorabilă decât alta pentru înființarea lui. Or, odată descoperit, dincolo de orice discuție despre natura și începuturile lui, acest „canal” de comunicare – pe lângă care muritorul de rând a trecut până atunci fără să îl poată intui – trebuie făcut vizibil într-un fel pe care același muritor care ar mai parcurge apoi pustia să-l înțeleagă ca nefiindu-i caracteristic ei. Spațiul sacru, odată localizat, decupează din contingent locul situației sale.

Iacov decide așadar să ridice un *monument*, să lase o urmă și, mai mult, să îndeplinească un ritual de instaurare, care

este, de fapt, deopotrivă un gest de umilitate și de entuziasm. Umilitate pentru că, orb ziua, a ignorat până atunci caracterul aparte al aceluși loc. Entuziasm pentru că în sfârșit, chiar dacă accidental, chiar dacă în somn, orbirea lui a luat sfârșit. Dacă vor (mai) dori de acum înainte să mențină vizibil în această lume respectivul loc sacru, oamenii nu au decât să întrețină respectivul *monument*, sau, și mai bine, să-l amplifice; el le va aduce astfel aminte, de fiecare dată când vor trece pe acolo, prin vizibilitatea sa diferită de prezența pustiei, împotriva căreia stă, că sunt în proximitatea unei „găuri de vierme”,^{iv} a unui canal de comunicare cu cerescul. Dacă însă vor uita să îl întrețină și, deci, să își aducă aminte, vizibilitatea aceluși „accident” fericit se va estompa: pietrele ridicate împotriva uitării se vor reazeza în pustie și locul se va reîntoarce în chaos.

^{iv} Termen legat de spațiu pe care l-a propus genul science-fiction pentru a rezolva o parte din dificultățile temporale ale călătoriilor în spațiu. „Gaura de vierme” este un loc privilegiat (sau un accident?) al spațiului, un „anafor” prin care trecând, călătorul interstelar se trezește instantaneu (timpul este suspendat, sau mai degrabă implodată în sine, în interiorul găurii de vierme) într-o altă zonă a universului, semnificativ îndepărtată de prima. „Gaura de vierme” scurtcircuitează zone din spațiu care altfel ar rămâne separate de durată prea lungă de parcurgere a distanței dintre ele; a stăpâni mecanismul acestui anafor înseamnă a călători prin salturi majore dintr-o zonă în alta a spațiului, folosind aceste „scurtături”. Unele episoade din *Star Trek* – seria *The Next Generation*, dar mai ales din seria *Deep Space Nine* – sunt construite în jurul acestui „personaj” straniu al spațiului quadri-dimensional. „Gaura de vierme” este o catastrofă (în sensul în care este folosit acest termen în teoria omonimă) în spațiu, pe care o folosesc pentru a evidenția discontinuitatea instaurată în lumea noastră de Ss, discontinuitate pe care Eliade a identificat-o în axis mundi, în arborele vieții, și este de găsit în expresii precum „buricul pământului”.