

Sacred Geography
Introductory Notes
Nick Campion

If you don't believe in Father God you are at the mercy of Mother Nature.
American evangelical preacher Billy Graham in 2005 in response to natural disasters in the USA.

Marks and Spencer is the biggest church on the high street for clothing.
Sir Stuart Rose, Chairman of retail chain Marks and Spencer, BBC Radio 4, 'Today' programme 2 October 2008.

This module concerns the ways in which people align themselves with the cosmos in terms of their immediate environment, mainly the natural and built environments. In your research project you can extend your work to include cosmos-as-sky, if you wish.

The module deals with both sacred geography – the identification of the sacred in the land – and sacred architecture – the construction of space in order to embody sacred principles.

The etymology of architecture takes us back to Platonic principles, being reminiscent of the notion of archetypes. Arche means 'first principle' and tec means on the ground.

Another useful term is **topophilia** meaning love (philia) of place (topo)

We also need to consider the meaning of 'sacred'. This will be one issue which you may wish to pursue in your reading.

Emile Durkheim, the sociologist and one of the theorists on whom we rely in this module, wrote that 'By definition, sacred beings are beings set apart. What distinguishes them is a discontinuity between them and profane beings'.¹

But is this the case? Are sacred and profane things clearly demarcated?

Are there cultures in which everything is sacred? Or in which all land is sacred?

In modern culture, do we mistakenly use a too narrow definition of the 'sacred'?

Themes

The main question for this module is whether sacred space is real or constructed?

¹ Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], p. 303

There are additional questions which arise, such as whether sacred space exists in modernity as much as in pre-modern practices and societies?

In a **modern context** we may point to recent developments such as

- Pagan reverence for nature
- New Age reverence for non-western traditions/cultures - Tibet, India, central America - and respect for cultures which have an obvious integration of mind and space - Aboriginal dream time and song lines.

And consider to what extent such ideas emerge out of a **romantic** state of mind. By romantic, we refer to the 18th century **Romantic** movement,

The issues which arise from pagan and New Age ideologies include concerns with ecology, global warming, environmentalism, and organic farming.

There is also usually a concern with the living earth, heavily influenced by Gaia theory.

Is there a difference between Pagan and New Age views of nature?

This is a question which is not easy to answer. However, Michael York argues that in Pagan thought nature is real, but in New Age thought, reality is transcendent and nature conceals an underlying reality.

Can sacred space be contrasted with secular/profane?

The title of Mircea Eliade's book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, implicitly contrasts The Sacred **and** the Profane

Should we consider shopping malls temples to consumerism?

Are sports arenas sacred – the twin towers at the old Wembley Stadium in London, 'the Hallowed turf'.

Are motorways and cars sacred spaces?

As Karen Fields wrote:

'W. E. H. Stanner's careful and respectful article on *Formes* called the sacred/profane dichotomy "unusable except at the cost of undue interference with the facts of observation".'²

2 Fields, Karen, 'Translator's Introduction' in Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], p. xliii.

Historical context

We may also consider notions of space in relation to concepts of nationhood or the relationship between people and the land. We may consider:

- Notions of community and place: the Jews and the Holy Land
- Nationalism - notions of blood/race and place
- Personification of the land occupied by the nation: Germany = Fatherland, Russia = Motherland.
- USA - the unlimited frontier, national character related to the wilderness.
- Maps – in British maps the British Empire was always coloured red.

We may consider that there are two types of sacred space

- Natural
 1. Mountains, rivers, streams, caves
- Artificial
 1. The temple: the temple is the space on the ground which relates to the sky at a particular moment of time – the sky is important because the sun, moon and stars are the measure of time
- And a third type where the natural and artificial meet?
 1. Sacred groves

And two definitions of sacred geography

- The study of the construction of sacred space: an academic discipline?
- The construction of/advocacy of, space as sacred: a religious/new age practice?
(→ 'Earth Mysteries')

And two time zones

- Ancient – often sacred geography is thought to be the preserve of pre-modern cultures
- Contemporary – but what about contemporary sacredness – perhaps we just don't recognise it.

And two cultures

- Non-western - often sacred geography is thought to be the preserve of non-western cultures
- Western – but what about modern sacredness – perhaps we just don't recognise it.

The question of modernity raises the issue of how we understand religion in modern culture. Does **secularisation**, the decline of regular church attendance which characterises modern European culture, indicate

- a decline in religiosity?

- or a shift to religious plurality?

This, though, is an issue with which we cannot deal specifically in this module.

Questions concerning sacred space

We can ask the following questions:

- What makes a space sacred?
- What constitutes sacredness?
- What is temporary sacred space?
- Can temporary sacred space be constructed in permanent?
- How is sacred space constructed?
- How is sacred space identified?
- How does sacred space differ from profane?
- Can sacred space contain profane space?
- Can profane space become sacred?
- How is community involved?
- When does community live in a sacred space?
- When does a community live outside a sacred space?
- Are there different levels of sacredness?
- A church within a cosmically designed town?

Does sacred space have a Function?

If so, what is it?

Sociologically, the creation of moral community?³

or

The creation of political communities?

From the point of view of the believer the function is obviously to contact something larger, other, or beyond immediate reality.

Is Sacred Geography alternative? Is it necessarily linked to New Age/Neo paganism?

The subject area tends to be dominated by romantic adherence to ancient tombs, sacred springs, stone circles and so on, all of which are seen as providing alternatives to modern culture. Yet, if we look at any great city, we see examples of architecture which are designed to reinforce allegiance to established political and religious authorities. In London we have Big Ben, the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace. St Paul's Cathedral and the Cenotaph. In Washington there is the White House, and many modern cities contain ostentatious monuments to capitalism.

³ Fields, Karen, 'Translator's Introduction' in Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], p. xlv.

Earth Mysteries

In the 1960s and 70s, 'alternative' theories of ancient attitudes to, and practices concerning, the landscape and buildings gave rise to the study of 'Earth Mysteries'.

The key figure in this development was John Michell whose book *The View Over Atlantis*, pulled together theories on ley lines, the Glastonbury Zodiac, Stonehenge, the Great Pyramid and Gothic cathedrals, attempting to find common themes.⁴ The resulting activities and investigations, which attempted to uncover evidence of ancient patterns in the landscape, and ancient human recognition of 'energies' in the land, were grouped together as Earth Mysteries.

However, during the 1980s and 90s the existence of landscape features, such as ley lines and earth zodiacs began to be doubted by some researchers.

As Paul Devereux reminisced in 1999:

I was to stay as editor [of the Ley Hunter] for 20 years, and over that time had to distinguish belief, wish-fulfilment and fantasy from what really needed explaining and experiencing.⁵

Do natural landscape features have a genuine sacred nature? Do they have an independent reality or are they human projections.

The same problem affects inquiry into apparent measurements and alignments in ancient buildings: are they intentional (intended by the builders) or coincidental (the result of modern selective interpretation of data)?

The question is an important one of we wish to understand history, but not if we wish to understand contemporary spirituality. If our interest is the latter, we can be concerned only with what people believe to be true, not whether it is true. Then we can look at what function earth mystery theory performs.

For example

Between them, psychedelic drugs and the space race – the Apollo moon landing was in 1969 – created an environment in which Stonehenge was seen either as a sort of embryonic NASA base or an alternative, Hippy cathedral. Taken together, their work appeared to substantiate ideas, already promoted by groups such as modern Druid orders, that the megalith builders belonged to an intellectually sophisticated, spiritually enlightened golden-age. From this perspective, the people who erected the standing stones of the British Isles were no longer the savages of archaeological imagination. They were

4 Michell, John, *The View Over Atlantis*, revised edition, London: Garnstone Press, 1972.

5 Devereux, Paul, *Earth Mysteries*, London: Piatkus 1999, p. 5.

closer to Rousseau's myth of the Noble Savage, the primitive holder of natural wisdom, untouched by the modern world, which has been central to the romanticisation of prehistoric Britain.⁶

As Roberts put it, as architectural or landscape features are rediscovered or invented do they become the focus for an **'imagined community'** arising partly from a **'chthonic imperative'**.⁷

One way to sidestep the issue of truth or falsity is to use Henri Corbin's term 'imaginal'.⁸ The term 'imaginal' was devised by Henry Corbin in order to distinguish products or characteristics of consciousness which are 'real', as against the word 'imaginative', in which qualities of the mind have no reality. The word also has other nuances, of the 'image' as icon, or embodiment of numinous reality, or of the world as an 'image' of heaven. The 'imaginal' world is Plato's archetypal world of Ideas and Forms.

We can then talk about the 'imaginal' landscape.

However, as cultural theorists, we do not need to believe that Platonic archetypes really exist, only that they provide a theoretical framework for understanding earth mysteries which comes from the western philosophical tradition and which avoid the dismissive connotations which arise when we describe a phenomenon as 'imaginative', meaning that it is automatically false.

Texts and sources:

- Glastonbury Zodiac (Katherine Maltwood, Mary Caine)
- Ley Lines: Watkins, Alfred, *The Old Straight Track*, London: Methuen 1925.
- Earth Mysteries: Michel, John, *The View Over Atlantis*, London 1969

Archaeoastronomy

Archaeoastronomy is the study of astronomical alignments, orientation or symbolism in ancient sites.

(Note the three definitions in one.)

- Alignment = precise relationship between an artificial site and a celestial pattern (e.g. the exact alignment of the Great Pyramid to due north).

⁶ Campion, Nicholas, *The Dawn of Astrology: A Cultural History of Western Astrology*, Vol. 1, London: Continuum, 2008. p. 27.

⁷ Roberts, Richard, 'The Chthonic Imperative: Gender, Religion and the Battle for the Earth', in Pearson, Joanne, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel, *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, p. 57.

⁸ See Corbin, Henri, *Mundus Imaginalis, or the Imaginary and the Imaginal*, 1964, http://www.hermetic.com/bey/mundus_imaginalis.htm

- Orientation = general relationship between an artificial site and the sky (e.g. the general orientation of British Neolithic round house entrances to the east.
- Symbolism = the meaning contained within an object e.g. 'In the play of winter solstice sunlight upon symbolic rock art [of the Chumash Indians of California], the shaman saw the sign of cosmic order...The shrines themselves were sacred because they were the places where cosmic order was revealed' (Ruggles 1999: 155).

Ecology

As a standard dictionary definition 'Ecology is the study of the relationships between plants, animals, people, and their environment, and the balances between these relationships' (Collins Dictionary).

The scientific concept of the links between all things is compatible with philosophical (Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic in the Greek classical tradition), modern esoteric (as in Theosophical) and many 'indigenous' (with quotation marks) and has therefore lent itself to spiritual ideas and movements – as in 'Eco-Spirituality', a topic of wide debate. This is from The Guardian:

there is another, deeper dimension to sustainability, which is as foundational as it is almost forgotten. Thomas Berry, a priest of the Passionist order and one of the leading voices in "eco-spirituality", said: "There is now a single issue before us: survival. Not merely physical survival, but survival in a world of fulfilment, survival in a living world, where the violets bloom in the springtime, where the stars shine down in all their mystery, survival in a world of meaning."

Berry suggested that there is a spiritual dimension to our present ecological crisis. It has long been understood by indigenous peoples that our relationship to the Earth is spiritually as well as physically sustaining. For indigenous peoples this is often included in their way of life, and expressed through their rituals and prayers.⁹

Sacred Space: Some Theory

Michel Foucault argued that concern with space is a modern phenomenon, writing that 'The nineteenth century was obsessed by time and history, the twentieth by space'.¹⁰

⁹ Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, 'Eco-spirituality: towards a values-based economic structure', *The Guardian*, Fri 17 May 2013 16.33 BST

¹⁰ See the discussion in Soja, Edward W., *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London Verso, 2003 [1989], p. 10.

Paul Devereux

We seem to have lost our way. New maps need to be drawn, a new geography perceived. We live in the only garden in the solar system, yet we have forgotten how to find our way around it, how to tend it, how to live **without (??)** it. Even, how to see it. This outer disorientation mirrors that within. We have forgotten our deities, or magic and mysticism, our dreams, the doorways into and out of our minds. These were the means by which we related to nature.

We have expelled ourselves from the planetary garden.¹¹

Mircea Eliade

For religious man, space is not homogenous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others....There is, then, a sacred space, and hence a strong, significant space; there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency, amorphous. Nor is this all. For religious man, this spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred – the only *real* and *real-ly* existing space – and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it'.¹²

For profane experience, on the contrary, space is homogenous and neutral; no break qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass. Geometrical space can be cut and delineated in any direction; but no qualitative differentiation and, hence, no orientation are given by virtue of its inherent structure.¹³

Sacred space has absolute value, a centre and hence an orientation and limits.

Profane space is homogenous and infinite, has no value, no reality, no orientation and no limits.

Do sacred sites have intrinsic value?
Or do we construct them?

Are they absolute and forbidden?
Or are they flexible and negotiated?

11 Devereux, Paul, *Secrets of Ancient and Sacred Places* (London: Blandford 1992), p. 8.

12 Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion*, Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1959, p. 20.

13 Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane; the Nature of Religion*, Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1959, p. 22.

Is sacred space 'liminal' – does it act as a boundary between human and spirit worlds/ time and eternity or any two different worlds?

Does it offer salvation? Or risk? Relaxation?

Definitions of Sacred Space

Thorley, Anthony, and Celia Gunn, *Sacred Sites: an overview*, Gaia Foundation, 2007, <http://www.earthskywalk.com/SacredSiteReport.pdf>

'Sacred Geography is the study of qualities of the sacred and related cultural activities found in certain places and expressed in a spatial context'.

Thorley, Anthony, 'Sacred Geography: a conceptual work in progress', *Spica*, Vol. IV, no 2, April 2016, pp 4-8, (p. 8), http://sophia-project.net/Spica/pdfs/SPICA_4.2.pdf

'Sacred Geography is a conceptual system in which certain places are of central ritual importance because it is there that one accesses cosmic currents of ritual purity and power.'

Lehman, F.K. *The Concept of 'Sacred Geography'* in R A Lukens-Bull, ed. *Sacred Places and Modern Landscapes*, 2003. p.xiv.

'An object, site or place may be said to be "sacred" if it is thought to possess particular powers demanding respect, reverence and ritual'

M Askew, 'Transformations and Continuities, in Lukens-Bull, ed. *Sacred Places*, 2003, p.64

'A **Spiritual Landscape** is a concept meant to draw attention both to the ways in which people imagine spirit forces and energies from or connected to places, *and* to the attitudes that people may have to "hidden" or mysterious realms lying beyond, behind or immanent within the visible earth'.

Catherine Allerton, 'Introduction: Spiritual Landscapes of Southeast Asia', *Anthropological Forum*, 19 (3). 2009.pp. 235-251 . Also LSE Research Online http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/26782/1/spiritual_landscapes_%28LSERO%29.pdf

'An object, site or place may be said to be "sacred" if it is thought to possess particular powers demanding respect, reverence and ritual'

M Askew, 'Transformations and Continuities, in Lukens-Bull, ed. *Sacred Places*, 2003, p.64

Ernst Cassirer

We may arrive at a provisional and general characterisation of the mythical intuition of space by starting from the observation that it occupies a kind of middle position between the space of sense perception and the space of pure cognition, that is, geometry. It is self-evident that the space of perception, the space of vision and touch does not coincide with the space of pure mathematics, that there is indeed a thoroughgoing divergence between the

two. The determination of sensory space (the former cannot even be derived from the latter in an unbroken logical sequence); on the contrary, we require a peculiar reversal of perspective, a *negation* of what seem immediately given in sensory perception, before we can arrive at the "logical space of pure mathematics. Particularly, a comparison between "physiological" space and the "metric" space upon which Euclidean geometry bases its constructions shows this antithetical relationship in every detail. What is established in the one seems negated and reversed in the other Euclidean space is characterised by the three basic attributes of continuity, infinity and uniformity. But all these attributes run counter to the character of sensory perception. Perception does not know the concept of infinity; from the very outset it is confined within certain spatial limits imposed by our faculty of perception.¹⁴

Perceptive space is

1. 'anisotropic'¹⁵ (aniso = unequal),
2. unhomogenous,
3. mythical,
4. concerned with content rather than with position,
5. and, where concerned with position and direction, is endowed with a particular 'accent',¹⁶ which goes back to the fundamental accent, the division between the sacred and profane.
6. 'raised out of its surroundings, hedged around and hoarded against them'.¹⁷

However, the construction of sacred space¹⁸

1. Requires precise dimensions
2. Tends to universalising tendencies
3. From which universal theories of physics/metaphysics are formed - e.g. theories of correspondence
4. Which in turn can become deterministic
5. Therefore can mimic Euclidean space

14 Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., Mythical Thought, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1971 [1955], p. 83.

15 Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., Mythical Thought, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1971 [1955], p. 84.

16 Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., Mythical Thought, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1971 [1955], p. 85.

17 Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., Mythical Thought, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1971 [1955], p. 85.

18 Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., Mythical Thought, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1971 [1955], pp. 84-9.

Euclidean space is 'metric', concerned with position, shares characteristics with its surroundings.

Arnold and Gold

Four errors afflict the construction of sacred space.¹⁹

1. The 'cosmogonic' error: the tendency to imagine nature as order, ignoring its individual components (individual plants, animals and so on).
2. Moral imposition: the imposition of moral order on nature.

'Subduing the land is a theological, as well as profitable, enterprise'.²⁰

3. Cartography, notation: the imposition of imagined historical and geographical schemes.
4. Forgetting: the forgetting that there was anything before such impositions.

Emile Durkheim

Durkheim questions the idea (cf Max Muller) that humanity's tendency to be overwhelmed by nature led to the creation of religion and deities as an explanation or system of protection.²¹

By taking a functional view of religion, defining it by its outer characteristics rather than internal beliefs, Durkheim extended the boundary of what we may consider to be religious.

(Durkheim) suggests that we could apply the same analysis in domains remote from anything we could call "religious" - politics certainly...and status orders of various kinds.²²

19 Arnold, Philip P and Ann Grodzins Gold (eds.), *Sacred Landscapes and Cultural Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2001), pp. 6-13.

20 Arnold, Philip P and Ann Grodzins Gold (eds.), *Sacred Landscapes and Cultural Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2001), p. 10.

21 Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], pp. 80-3.

22 Fields, Karen, 'Translator's Introduction' in Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], p. xlix.

‘Sacredness is not a quality inherent in certain objects, nor is it available to the unaided senses of just any individual human observer. It is a quality that objects acquire when they are, in the phrase from Durkheim’s definition, “set apart and forbidden”’.²³

Deyan Sudjic

We build for emotional and psychological purposes, as well as for ideological and practical reasons. The language of architecture is used by software billionaires endowing a museum in return for naming rights to project power, as much as by sociopathic dictators. Architecture has been shaped by the ego, and by the fear of death, as well as by political and religious impulses. And it in turn serves to give them shape and form. Trying to make sense of the world without acknowledging architecture's psychological impact on it is to miss a fundamental aspect of its nature. To do so would be like ignoring the impact of warfare on the history of technology, and vice versa.

Unlike science and technology, which have conventionally been represented as being free of ideological connotations, architecture is both a practical tool and a expressive language, capable of carrying highly specific messages. Yet the difficult in establishing the precise political meanings of buildings, and the elusive nature of the political context of architecture, has led today's generation of architects to claim that their work is autonomous, or neutral, or to believe that of there is no such thing as overtly 'political' architecture, it is confined to an isolated ghetto, no more representative of the concerns of high-culture architecture than a shopping mall or a Las Vegas casino.

It is a flawed assumption. There may be no fixed political meaning to a given architectural language, but that does not mean that architecture lacks the potential to assume a political aspect. Few successful architects can avoid producing buildings with a political dimension at some point in their career, whether they want to or not.²⁴

Barbara Bender

Bender has promoted the theory of **contested space**, in which one space can have a succession of identities either in sequence or simultaneously. One classic example is Stonehenge, which is claimed by archaeologists, Druids, modern pagans and New Agers of various kinds, English Heritage (which supervises ancient monuments) and tourist operators.

23 Fields, Karen, 'Translator's Introduction' in Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], p. xlv.

24 Sudjic, Deyan, *The Edifice Complex: How the Rich and Powerful Shape the World*, London: Allen Lane 2005, p. 7.

Not just the land but the very word 'landscape has often been used as though it belongs to a particular class. Recently British Rail put up two Intercity posters for First Class travel. One of them began with the words: The only Constable you'll see at a hundred miles an hour...'. The assumption was clear: those who matter know who Constable is, those who might be confused by a seemingly obscure reference to the forces of law and order will not get the joke and do not matter.²⁵

Bender evokes the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony.²⁶ Gramsci's argument was that the proletarian revolution had failed to happen in western countries not because of the use of violent repression, but cultural manipulation. The workers, then, can be effectively sedated through a diet of consumerism, films, fashion and so on. In Bender's example, above, romantic images of landscape are appropriated and used to generate images of old-England which obscure issues such as the private ownership of such land, and the expulsion of the farmers and peasants who worked it in the 16th-18th centuries.

Rick Arrandale, of Glastonbury's Avalon Institute, with whom I taught at Bath Spa University, raised the alternative concept of **shared space**. He pointed to the Glastonbury Thorn, the tree on Wearyall Hill in Glastonbury, which was used by both pagans and Christians. (Subsequently, though, the tree was attacked by Christians).

Christopher Tilley

Tilley has applied the principles of phenomenology to landscape study.

Phenomenology requires that we

- examining a phenomenon on its own terms
- examining consciousness on its own terms
- BUT, there is a paradox:
- Consciousness only exists in relation to an external object

Criticising the quantifying, mathematical, scientistic trends in geography in the 1970s, Tilley argues

The alternative view starts from regarding space as a medium rather than a container for action, something that is involved in action and cannot be divorced from it. As such space does not and cannot exist apart from the events and activities with which it is implicated. Space is socially produced, and different societies, groups and individuals act out their lives in different spaces. Space in itself no longer becomes a meaningful term. There is no

²⁵ Bender, Barbara, *Stonehenge: Making Space*, Oxford, Berg 1998, p. 99.

²⁶ Bender, Barbara, *Stonehenge: Making Space*, Oxford, Berg 1998, p. 100.

space, only spaces. These spaces, as social productions, are always centred in relation to human agency and are amenable to reproduction or change because their constitution takes place as part of the day-to-day praxis or practical activity of individuals and groups in the world. They are meaningfully constituted in relation to human agency and activity. A humanized space forms both the medium and outcome of action, both constraining and enabling it. A centred and meaningful space involves specific users of linkages between the physical space or the non-humanly created world, somatic states of the body, the mental space of cognition and representation and the space of movement, encounter and interaction between persons and the human and non-human environment. Socially produced space combines the cognitive, the physical and the emotional into something that may be reproduced but is always open to transformation and change. A social space, rather than being uniform and forever the same, is constituted by differential densities of human experience, attachment and involvement. It is above all contextually constituted, providing particular settings for involvement and the creation of meanings. The specificity of place is an essential element in understanding its significance. It follows that the meanings of space always involve a subjective dimension and cannot be understood apart from the symbolically constructed lifeworlds of social actors. *Space has no substantial essence in itself, but only has a relational significance, created through relations between peoples and places.*²⁷

(my italics)

Phenomenology of landscape

On the experience of the solstice at Stonehenge, Ed Krupp appealed to the phenomenological perspective when he wrote

One should make a point of being there. Celestial events take place in context. When you see what actually happens in the landscape, you learn a great deal more about it. It is, of course, possible to determine the alignment of a building with instruments, but nuances of light and shadow details of the horizon, difficulties in practical observation, and many more subjective aspects of a site can only be appreciated in person.²⁸

Ruggles himself added, 'Similarly, by walking in the modern landscape we can try to appreciate patterns of relationship between monuments and the topographic elements of the landscape as experienced by people living in that landscape in

27 Tilley, Christopher, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg 1994), pp. 10-11.

28 Ed Krupp, HASTRO History of Astronomy e mail list 8 August 1995, cited in Ruggles, Clive, *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999, p. 151.

prehistoric times'.²⁹ Ruggles, concedes that we can never exactly know that we experience the same feelings when watching an especially bright full moon as did a prehistoric observer, but he does argue that 'the idea deserves serious consideration in contextual interpretations'.³⁰

Alfred Shutz argued that phenomenology is the source of all philosophical thinking: 'phenomenology, searching for a real beginning of all philosophical thinking, hopes when fully developed, to end where all the traditional philosophies start'.³¹

According to Helmut Wagner, phenomenology's

starting point is given in the experiences of the conscious human being who lives and acts in a "world" which he apperceives and interprets, and which makes sense to him. He deals with this world in the intellectually spontaneous yet active mode of intentionality: There is no phase or aspect of human consciousness which appears in and by itself; consciousness is always consciousness of something. The forms of consciousness are tied to the context of experiences.³²

29 Ruggles, Clive, *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999, p. 151.

30 Ruggles, Clive, *Astronomy in Prehistoric Britain and Ireland*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1999, p. 151.

31 Schutz, Alfred, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, ed Helmut R. Wagner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1979, p. 54.

32 Wagner, Helmut R., 'Introduction' in Schutz, Alfred, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, ed Helmut R. Wagner, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1979, pp. 1-50., p. 5