

Sacred Space By Claire Liu

What is Sacred Space? What is the theory of the Universe? Understanding how we live in the Universe's space, our reflections and reassessment towards Sacred Space, our time, our Universe and 'I', a human, made with substance and spirituality.

As Christians we believe that everything created by God has a space and given a purpose for its existence within the universe. Humans need to sleep, dreams can make men feel lonely, and coming to this earth seems a bit of a waste of time, where we learn about sadness and pain. It would seem, as the 'Little Prince' suggested to the 'Snake', that it might as well find a way to leave, as this would be its wise food for thought. A space, which is of substance, now occupied by a human, who is born with a soul, is a being equipped with the ability to experience the overcoming of the profane. The core subject is that when man exists in the Space, and his plight is put under favorable or unfavorable conditions, he will begin a process of learning and understanding how this predicament and this Space can now be opened to be made a sacred one.

Within the space we live in, we work hard to preserve, for our bodies, our existence and often feel the need to expand into more space, to improve our feelings of safety, comfort, and protection. But in truth, when on earth, we occupy a very small part of space. We can be restricted as the walls that we build will surround and will fence us in. Our dilemma is to create doors, locks and when we do open these doors to welcome guests and the big world waiting for us beyond, we become fearful and unsure of the unknown, and again making more food for thought.

Space is full of creativity, and Space is free and limitless but can be fearful and full of dangers of calamities, of weather and of men and other living creatures; eg. For curiosity, gain and other reasons, space can be expanded into the cosmic universe eg. "arms race" among nations. Science tells us that man's interest in space led to the discovery by mathematicians like Euclide (330-275) that one line in the oldest math text hinted at hidden universes. The theory of Height, width and length expanded into Euclidean geometry which Matteo Ricce in 1607, 2000 years later brought this science and Christianity to the Forbidden City. Another scientist and priest Lemaitre 1894-1966 discovered what many feel is the greatest theory of all time called the Big Bang Theory in 1932. Edwin Powell Hubble (1889-1953) astronomer, was renowned for determining that there are other galaxies in the Universe beyond the Milky Way and for observing that the universe is expanding at a constant rate. Albert Einstein (1879-1955) world famous physicist, found the universe was static, with cosmological constants. Pierre Teilhard de Chondin (1881-1955) findings of the omega point, and as a religious man, he believes this omega point is the Christ, and all will return to Jesus and nature astronomy will destroy all in the Universe. Stephen William Hawking (1942-2018) feels the greatness of mankind, and that the universe is self sufficient, therefore he questions if God is still necessary.

Men also used architecture not only as art expressing or presenting style, harmony, but also the protection of regularity, defined rules and social order or the state of society. Using buildings to standardize or normalize in the different eras of history. A holy temple in English called Profane on its outside, inside is the temple of standardized inner space, is wrapped up as the Sacred space. (Roger Scruton 1944-2020) Scruton aims to show that there is still a place for God in modern society. He wrote a book called 'The Face of God'. He looks at the atheist view and how it removes God from the world before looking at how the individual fits in and where the face of God appears in the lives of the individual and life of the planet. The bible verses for seeking the "face" of God are all found in the Old testament, The hebrew word use for face means "face, the part that turns" it comes from the root that means 'to turn, to face, appear, and look" This implies being face-to-face with God, which is a place of deep intimacy. In my view too, the space of nature is Sacred and a place or destination for man to return to.

Marcus Vitruvius, a Roman architect and engineer's 3 basic principles are of stability, utility and beauty and that the Vitruvian man symbolizes "the perfect man". He believes Humans have a unique ability to take any position they want, either descending to the bottom the chain of 'being' or ascending himself up to God.

On the subject of "I" , before Christianity was introduced to China, ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu's life lessons stressed letting go, flowing with one's life. He claims his problem starts with his owning a body, which leads to questions of space and self. Chinese poet Li Bai whose words evoked emotions in others much beyond the normal man, interpreting this world to convey and express the space man lives in with conviction , and that the space can in turn affect us, eg. Su Tung Po wrote it's better to have no meat to eat, than to live in an abode without 'Bamboo'.... placing this word to lessen the feeling of profanity in human living. The concept of I am able, I can, and life continues with desire, with physiology, our feelings, sentiment, sense and perception, our intellect with reason and rationality passes on from age to age. As China grew with conversion of souls to Christianity and learnt of man being created by God the Father, with the Holy Trinity, we grew to understand our true inner spirit which we believed was given to us by our forefathers has really been infused with the spirit of God on the day we were born.

Long ago, Martin Bubber, (1987-1965) philosopher, wrote about the I -Thou relationship. On the theory of living as such, if one can pair 'I' to 'thou', we can reach a very rich life with each other. Martin affirms that God is the eternal, central, ultimate, true Thou of human life, that this Thou is found through meeting the temporal, earthly, concrete human Thou (thus God is the Thou of life even of the life of the 'godless'). Emmanuel Kant, a philosopher and strong defender of Liberty, morality, Justice and ethics. His work is still taught in the universities of the world named "categorical imperative", that the ends do not justify the means and is unconditional and absolute for all people. For him, morality is the most important, and man can change the world. The aim is to continue the relationship of Space and man in this world. Paul Tillich (1886-1965), a philosopher and theologian, with questions and answers wrote on the concept of Being. Through his systematic theology, and self discovery, he concluded that God is the highest of beings with infinite transcendence. Paul's method of correlation puts 'Faith' as the ultimate concern at the center of human mind, surpassing ontology of courage, such as

anxiety of fate and death. Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) spoke of the Church and the life of faith in this New World, and Christianity in lieu of religion or religionless in Christianity. Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) a Catholic theologian, preaches sin can be overcome through a calling, he asks believers to overcome and face the search for a new man. When space is filled with faith, a difference occurs, as man praises God, and the space is made sacred.

Mircea Eliade's two great ideas of the Sacred and Profane - reality is an interplay of two dimensions of existence: The Sacred and The Profane. - The Primordial Man/Religious Man seeks to live in the Sacred while Secular/Contemporary man consciously or unconsciously lives in the Profane. The Sacred is all around us and the Profane can be non-existent. Hierophany is a breakthrough of the Sacred into the Profane. - can manifest as revelatory illumination (like Nirvana or Noesis) or can manifest as a place or object that carries significant and archetypal meaning.

The concept of Space with Sacred and the idea of this is not new and yet today's Christians had yet to analyze and understand the relationship of Space vs. Profane and Sacred, adding the subject of 'Time' As people's views may differ, space and sacred with 'time' have different relationships for us too.

When Jesus was living on earth, all the time and space He passed and occupied were made 'sacred'. Men and women and children who were with Him also chanced to share His Sacred Space in real time. As Jesus preached and said to His disciples "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one goes to the Father except by Me." If His followers can accept this, we, the following generations of His disciples, should be able to grasp this "sacred" moment too. In memory of our Lord's coming, the time at River Jordan, Jesus' baptism with the crowds gathering around has brought out the Sacred taste in that Space as well. (Mark 3:16-17)

In conclusion, if we do not destroy or change the image of God in His creations by changing and removing His Image, we shall not end in loneliness. I believe It is important to open our hearts and courageously cross the final line. The way to live is by exiting from our comfort zone and entering the I-Thou model of living. We can continue to open new spaces and onwards, by understanding through knowing non-Christians Space, know what their different viewpoints are and increase our understanding and others as well as understand more deeply our belief in God. I trust that the "breakthrough point" will come, not as a feeling or a man's visualized point in space, but a point of penetration from the love of God, allowing our ordinary Space completely changed to extraordinary.