

**My[Sacred]Space:
Discovering Sacred Space in Cyberspace**

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Abstract

The notion of “sacred space” has received attention from various scholars in the field of religious studies, as well as other academic disciplines. However, twentieth century contributions are specifically relevant to the study at hand. Moreover, it seems only natural to begin an analysis of “sacred space” by describing what is meant by the word “sacred” in its territorial connection with “space.” Therefore, specific understandings of “the sacred” will be explored, such as those developed by French sociologist Émile Durkheim and Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade. Following this, the modern construct “cyberspace” will be explored, as the reader is led into the main topic under investigation: the existence of sacred space in cyberspace, with a special emphasis on the cyber-social network MySpace. This part of the investigation will explore the various correlations that exist between these understandings of “sacred space” and those found in MySpace, arguing that the latter qualifies as being analogous to the former by the way in which it functions for its users.

[1] Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe created MySpace in August of 2003. The website is self-described as “an online community that lets you meet your friends’ friends.” You can “create a community” and “share photos, journals, and interests with your growing network of mutual friends!”¹ Furthermore, it is described as a “social networking platform that allows Members to create unique personal profiles online in order to find and communicate with old and new friends.”² These friends can view each other’s profiles, communicate with each other, share photos, post journals/blogs and comments, and describe their interests. According to *Fortune* editor Patricia Sellers, MySpace is a place where one can “hang out and express” oneself. It is estimated that there are currently about 2.2 million bands, 8,000 comedians, thousands of filmmakers, and over 100 million “regular” users with MySpace accounts. It is also estimated that the average number of users who sign up each day is about 230,000.³ In fact, in 2005, MySpace “passed Google in terms of traffic” and currently receives about one billion views per day.⁴ Moreover, as of November 2009, there were currently over 265 million user accounts. According to Alexa Internet, MySpace is currently the eleventh most popular website, globally, while it is the fifth most popular in the United States.⁵ This places MySpace right between the other two most popular online social networks: Facebook and Twitter (the former as the second most popular, globally, and third most popular in the United States, and the latter ranking thirteenth most popular both globally and nationally).^{6,7} These statistics will be revisited again below, but before proceeding, the terminology underlying this analysis must be explored.⁸

[2] When many people hear or read about “the sacred,” its polar opposite, “the profane,” creeps into their minds as well. Moreover, many also associate these terms with Mircea Eliade. Eliade may, in fact, be responsible for popularizing these terms in his 1957 seminal work, *The Sacred*

and the Profane, but the current analysis will begin around 45 years earlier (1912) with the distinctions that Émile Durkheim developed in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. According to Durkheim, the “distinctive trait of religious thought” is the basic division of the world into *the sacred* and *the profane*.⁹ These two modes of being are distinguished by their heterogeneity, i.e., their distinct differences. For Durkheim, this heterogeneity is “absolute” in its necessity for distinction; “In all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another.”¹⁰ To put this differentiation into terms of the physical universe, Durkheim states that the sacred represents that which is “ideal and transcendental,” while the profane represents the material world.¹¹

[3] According to Durkheim, however, “anything can be sacred.” There can be sacred gods, spirits, rocks, trees, springs, pebbles, pieces of wood, homes, etc. As Durkheim states, “The circle of sacred objects cannot be determined...once for all. Its extent varies infinitely, according to the different religions.”¹² In other words, nothing is inherently sacred, i.e., humanity classifies things as such; “there are sacred things of every degree.”¹³ Furthermore, to clarify this description more thoroughly, “the sacred character assumed by an object is not implied in the intrinsic properties of this latter: *it is added to them*. The world of religious things is not one particular aspect of empirical nature; *it is superimposed upon it*.”¹⁴ Moreover, Durkheim states, “the sanctity of a thing is due to the collective sentiment of which it is the object.”¹⁵ Thus, one finds the notion of the sacred to be relative from tradition to tradition, as cultures vary in regard to one another. However, two aspects of this notion remain universal: the sacred is always and fundamentally disconnected from the profane (the profane is simply that which is not sacred), and everything that is sacred “is the object of respect.”¹⁶

[4] Since there is a complete distinction between the sacred and the profane, any sort of assimilation between the two is impossible; “the sacred and the profane have always and everywhere been conceived by the human mind as two distinct classes, as two worlds between which there is nothing in common.”¹⁷ Given this explicit dichotomy, it is still, nevertheless, possible for one to pass from one of these realms (the sacred or the profane) into the other; it is assumed, however, that one would be passing from the profane into the sacred – the reversal of this transition would not seem reasonable. This “metamorphosis” is accomplished through a series of various initiation rites and ceremonies. The change in one’s state of being is viewed as a transformation of one’s “whole being.” According to Durkheim, “It is said that at this moment the young man dies, that the person that he was ceases to exist, and that another is instantly substituted for it. He is re-born under a new form.” It should also be mentioned that this transformation – this death and re-birth – is not understood symbolically; the experience is understood literally to take place.¹⁸

[5] To reiterate what has been stated above, the sacred and the profane cannot each be lived in “at the same time with the same intensity.” That is, one cannot give oneself up completely to one of these modes of being and remain in the other; the whole conceptual notion of the metamorphosis makes this impossible.¹⁹ According to Durkheim, the “logical chasm” between the sacred and the profane makes it impossible to put these two modes of being in contact with one another: “The two classes cannot even approach each other and keep their own nature at the same time.” However, Durkheim does allow for some sort of communication between the two,

via initiation rites, because, otherwise, the sacred would “be good for nothing.”²⁰ Thus, that which is sacred is protected by certain prohibitions from that which is profane. The natures of these sacred *things* are what religious beliefs represent and express, either in relation to each other, or in relation to that which is profane. The various “rites,” then, should be understood as the “rules of conduct” for how one should conduct oneself “in the presence of these sacred objects.”²¹

[6] Another distinction Durkheim recognizes is in regard to what he calls the “purely” sacred and the “impurely” sacred.²² This distinction stems from the fact that there are “inequalities and incompatibilities between sacred things”;²³ this also relates directly to Durkheim’s claim that there are sacred things of every degree. Thus, there are two “classes” of prohibitions: those that concern the sacred and the profane, and those that concern the sacred and the “less sacred” (or, the “purely” and “impurely”), which is, in effect, profane in its relation to the “more sacred.”²⁴ Following the understanding of William Robertson Smith, Durkheim states that “the notion of sacredness” is ambiguous, i.e., there are two types of religious forces: the beneficent and the evil. Just as sacred and profane things necessarily “repel” one another, these two classes of the sacred do so as well.²⁵ However, there does exist a commonality between the two: they both repel that which is profane, and they are both to be respected (Durkheim notes the seemingly reverent attributes that even horrid things may arouse). Interestingly enough, Durkheim states, “it frequently happens that an impure thing or an evil power becomes a holy thing or a guardian power, without changing its nature, through a simple modification of external circumstances.” One example Durkheim cites, in order to elucidate these “external circumstances,” is that a corpse (something profane) is at first feared, but is then venerated as a relic (something sacred) after the mourning has ceased.²⁶ Thus, the ambiguity of the sacred is displayed by the fact that the pure and impure varieties of it belong to the same class: the sacred. Thus, there is “no break in continuity” between them, i.e., something or someone may pass into the other “without changing its nature”; “The pure is made out of the impure, and reciprocally.”²⁷

[7] Sociologist and theologian Peter L. Berger, who has very similar views to Durkheim regarding the sacred, adds a few notable attributes to the notion of it as well. According to Berger, the sacred is “a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet related to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience.” This has very obvious parallels to Durkheim’s understanding. However, Berger states that the sacred can also apply to “objectifications of human culture,” i.e., customs or institutions.²⁸ Thus, “socialized identity as a whole can then be apprehended by the individual as something sacred,” because it was “willed by the gods,” i.e., its very nature has a sacred origin.²⁹ The sacred cosmos is an “immensely powerful reality” other than humanity, but the sacred also refers to humanity in a very particular way; humanity is included in the sacred cosmos, which gives life an “ultimately meaningful order.” For Berger, the sacred is also understood as “sticking out” from everyday life, and can also be “potentially dangerous.” This danger, however, or rather, the power of the danger(s), can actually be “harnessed” and used to suit the needs of the society. In accordance with Durkheim’s understanding, Berger views the profane as the opposite of the sacred as well; “All phenomena are profane that do not ‘stick out’ as sacred.” However, according to Berger, something profane can simply become sacred, that is, it can be “infused” with “sacred power.” Berger also states that, at a deeper level, the sacred is in opposition to “chaos.”³⁰ Thus, chaos can be understood as the “oldest antagonist of the sacred.”³¹ However, the relation between the two

is significant, because without chaos, the sacred could not exist; it is from which it emerged. This basic distinction is what the next scholar to be explored necessarily relies upon.

[8] Mircea Eliade utilizes the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane in a similar way, but differs in a few aspects from Durkheim and Berger. For Eliade, the sacred is also in opposition to the profane; it is “wholly other.”³² This polarity, he states, is usually understood as an “opposition between *real* and *unreal*,” or “being” and “non-being.”³³ The sacred, then, is thus “the only indubitable reality.”³⁴ However, one can actually only become aware of the sacred when it manifests itself to oneself as something other than the profane (this is one of the most notable differences between Eliade’s understanding and the Durkheimian “classification”). The term Eliade uses to designate this occurrence is “hierophany”; “It is a fitting term, because it does not imply anything further; it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, *i.e.*, that *something sacred shows itself to us*.”³⁵ Moreover, anything that humanity “has ever handled, felt, came in contact with or loved *can* become a hierophany” (this, however, parallels Durkheim’s claim that anything can be sacred). Eliade also states that it is not possible to know with certainty if there is anything that has not at one point served as a hierophany.³⁶ This manifestation of the sacred can occur in something as simple as a stone or a tree, or as complex as all possible “movements (getting up, walking, running)...various employments (hunting, fishing, agriculture)...physiological activities (nutrition, sexual life, etc.),” the “essential words” of one’s language, and even the entire cosmos.³⁷ However, what must be clarified here is that these various potentialities are not to be worshipped or adored as themselves – “they are worshipped precisely because they are *hierophanies*”; the stone, for example, no longer displays itself as a stone – it reveals itself as the sacred.³⁸ Eliade further states, “A thing becomes sacred in so far as it embodies (that is, reveals) something other than itself.”³⁹ An interesting paradox here is that (to use the example of the stone again) the stone that has revealed the sacred still remains a stone as well; it is concurrently a stone and a manifestation of the sacred. To clarify this apparent paradox, Eliade states that for those whom the stone is revealed as a manifestation of the sacred, “its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality.” In other words, the stone’s profane existence is no longer relevant from the perspective of “religious man.” For Eliade, the sacred not only relates to “being” or equate to “reality” – it is also equivalent to “power.”⁴⁰ Thus, “religious man deeply desires *to be*, to participate in *reality*, to be saturated with power.”⁴¹ As was briefly mentioned above, one of the most notable differences between Durkheim’s notion of the sacred and Eliade’s is that, for Durkheim, society designates what is sacred, whereas for Eliade, the sacred exists and its recognition is dependent upon its manifestation; thus, the distinction is between classification and inherent existence.

[9] After having briefly analyzed the concept of the sacred, the notion of “sacred space,” and in particular, Eliadean “sacred space,” can now be more thoroughly explored. For Eliade, the distinction between “sacred space” and “profane space” is really a matter of distinction between real space and unreal space. Space, Eliade states, is “not homogeneous” for “religious man,” *i.e.*, it contains “breaks” that divide it up, so to speak, into sacred and profane spatial representations; “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.”⁴² These “breaks” in space are what constitute hierophanies, the manifestations of the sacred at a particular place – at a “fixed point.”⁴³ It is this manifestation that allows man to orient himself at the centre of “the only *real* and *real-ly* existing space.”⁴⁴ Thus, the fixed point that is revealed, allows the world to

be “constituted,” i.e., it reveals “absolute reality” in distinction from the surrounding, other space.⁴⁵ Since this sacred, “fixed point,” which the hierophany reveals, is a revelation of *reality*, it is “equivalent to the creation of the world.” To clarify, then, sacred space is the result of the “non-homogeneity” of space; profane space is simply “homogenous and neutral” – there is no “break” that “qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass.”⁴⁶ Thus, according to Eliade, “Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.”⁴⁷ Accordingly, the understanding that Eliade has of sacred space reflects his notion of the sacred: it inherently exists and, thus, must reveal itself. This is fundamentally different from Durkheim’s understanding, which does not require the type of “hierophanic” manifestation that Eliade does; humanity simply designates what is sacred, thereby designating what constitutes “sacred space.”

[10] An interesting point that Eliade makes, however, is that there does not always need to be a hierophany, when it comes to the manifestation of sacred spaces; occasionally, “some *sign* suffices to indicate the sacredness of a place.” This is because the mere sign is capable of introducing “an absolute element” that can function in the same manner as a hierophany; it creates a “break” in space. Moreover, if there is not a sign, then one can also be provoked.⁴⁸ For instance, Eliade uses a bull being turned loose and then hunted days later by the members of a tribe as an example. Wherever the people end up finding it, they kill and sacrifice it right there – sanctifying the newfound space. According to Eliade, individuals are simply not capable of choosing the sacred site; a hierophany is required, and if there is none, a sign must take its place – something that one also cannot choose.⁴⁹ However, this line of reasoning is just short of actually granting one the capability of designating that which is sacred, and thus, sacred space. In other words, these exceptions to the rule, so to speak, in regard to hierophanies, suggest an understanding that is similar to Durkheim’s (society designates that which is sacred), except for the fact that the sacred is believed to be an inherent reality.

[11] To further display the fundamental distinction between sacred space and profane space, Eliade uses a church as an example. The church is in obvious opposition to the street from which it is approached. The separator between these two areas is the door, which leads into the sacred space of the church. It is this “threshold” that sets up the “boundary” or “frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds – and at the same time...[is] the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible.” Thus, the threshold acts as both *symbol* and *vehicle* of passage “from one kind of space to the other.”⁵⁰ To further illustrate this, Eliade notes the symbolism of a ladder: “*It gives plastic expression to the break through the planes necessitated by the passage from one mode of being to another.*”⁵¹ Furthermore, it is the symbolic nature of climbing and ascending that “symbolises [*sic*] the way towards the absolute reality.”⁵²

[12] Since the sacred is understood as the revealer of absolute reality, it is understood that it “*founds the world,*” in the sense that it establishes its order.⁵³ This essentially amounts to the “consecration” of a territory – a recreation in light of its new, sacred nature. What is interesting to note here, is that according to Eliade, “to organize a space is to repeat the paradigmatic work of the gods,” i.e., the consecration of a territory is, in effect, mimicking the primordial creation out of chaos by the gods.⁵⁴ One particular motif that exists in many cultures, in regard to archetypal sacred space, is the “cosmic mountain.” The “cosmic mountain” symbolizes the centre of the

world, in that it serves as an “*axis mundi* connecting earth with heaven”; it is also held to be the highest point on earth as well, Eliade notes, which actually makes it the closest physical place to heaven.⁵⁵ Temples are also understood to be representations of the sacred archetypal space, replicating the symbolism of the “cosmic mountain.”⁵⁶ According to Eliade, the temple is not only understood as an *imago mundi*; “it is also interpreted as the earthly reproduction of a transcendent model.”⁵⁷ Moreover, temples are not the only places that have been regarded as centres of the world; “every holy place,” i.e., “every place that bore witness to an incursion of the sacred into profane space” is regarded as such as well.⁵⁸ Since these centres are simply repetitions of an archetype, the centres that symbolize this “can be repeated at any level man wishes, and under any form, however crude.”⁵⁹ However, Eliade further explains, when these “holy places” (the various temples, altars, etc.) lose their “religious efficacy, people discover and apply other geomantic, architectural or iconographic formulas which, in the end, sometimes astonishingly enough, represent the same symbolism of the ‘center’”;⁶⁰ this is very reminiscent of Durkheim, in that “*anything* can be a symbol or can play the part of a symbol.” Moreover, any sort of “dwelling” can be a centre, because it symbolizes the same thing: a representation of the *axis mundi*, the earthly representation of the transcendent archetype.⁶¹ Furthermore, it is because the dwelling has been constructed in a certain way, according to certain “rites,” that it is transformed into a centre. This is another interesting point in itself: sacred space can also be constructed. For Eliade, if a hierophany has not revealed any space as sacred, and if there is not any sort of sign present that depicts it as such, one can construct it based on “the laws of cosmology and geomancy,” i.e., based on the laws of the primordial creation.⁶²

[13] Since sacred space can be revealed, provoked, or constructed, the implication is that, for Eliade, “religious man” (which for him, is actually all human beings) has a number of options available for approaching the sacred. He notes that man has a desire, or “thirst,” for *being*, i.e., to have “*real existence*” (which is not possible in profane space);⁶³ this is because Eliade understands man to be “*homo religiosus*,” i.e., by nature, he is *religious* whether he is conscious of it or not.⁶⁴ As a result, man has always sought to “*live as near as possible to the Center of the World*.”⁶⁵ To further illustrate this, Eliade notes an example concerning the Arunta tribe of Achilpa, and the fact that they always carry their “sacred pole” – their centre – around with them wherever they go; its destruction would result in theirs as well.⁶⁶ The possible existence of more than one centre, which certainly seems like a probable occurrence cross-culturally, as well as within, may appear to be problematic. However, for Eliade, the “multiplicity, or even the infinity” of centres is not a problem. The reason for this, he states, is because sacred space “admits of an infinite number of breaks and hence is capable of an infinite number of communications with the transcendent.”⁶⁷ It is simply the repetition of an archetype, so the number of times that this occurs is not necessarily important. There is, however, another aspect of sacred space that remains to be explored: sacred time.

[14] According to Eliade, the sacred does not only “break” into space, it “breaks” into time as well. Thus, time, for “religious man,” is not homogeneous either; manifestations of the sacred break it apart as well. It is “by means of rites” that man can similarly pass from profane time (“ordinary temporal duration”) into sacred time. A very important aspect of sacred time is that it is “reversible,” i.e., it is the present rendition of mythical time (primordial time); mythical time is participated in as the “now.”⁶⁸ Furthermore, sacred time is “indefinitely recoverable” and “indefinitely repeatable.” That is, it does not “pass” in the usual sense (there is no “irreversible

duration”), it does not ever change (it is “ontological”), and it is “never exhausted.”⁶⁹ The primordial sacred time, then, can be said to be homogeneous in and of itself, i.e., it is nonhomogeneous in relation to time in general, but not in relation to itself. There is, however, no association between it and temporal duration; it is entirely different in structure and origin, and the linear concept of time for “nonreligious man” has no place in it. Although sacred time is created and “sanctified by the gods,” it is possible to be made present through “festivals” – by *participating* in the mythical time.⁷⁰ Since this time is considered to be the same as that of the primordial creation, one feels more free and pure by being “reintegrated” into it. Accordingly, this time is “sacred,” because it is “transfigured by the presence of the gods,” and “strong” (that is, potent and filled with creative power), because it belongs to the time of the creation of the universe.⁷¹ Thus, this “reintegration” is, for Eliade, “equivalent to becoming contemporary with the gods,” because one is then “living in their presence – even if their presence is mysterious in the sense that it is not always visible.”⁷² This can be seen as being congruent with the fact that man always “thirsts” to be in this “primordial reality”;⁷³ Eliade calls it a “thirst for the *sacred* and nostalgia for *being*.”⁷⁴

[15] Related to the concept of sacred time is that of myth. As Eliade explains, all of the primordial revelations that have been associated with humanity’s beliefs, pertaining to *being*, constitute their myths. “Myth,” for Eliade, recounts a “sacred history,” i.e., a particular occurrence that took place in the primordial time. Moreover, the main characters in these myths are gods and “culture heroes.” A myth, Eliade states, is also understood as “revealing a mystery,” because it explains to people how a particular thing was accomplished or “began to *be*.” Furthermore, myths speak “only of *realities*, of what *really* happened.”⁷⁵ Thus, myths function as factual tales of reality. Interestingly enough, Eliade states that modern myths, under which he files the act of reading, contain “countless mythical motifs,” such as fights between heroes and monsters, various combats and ordeals, and “paradigmatic” figures and images, such as maidens, heroes, “paradise” landscapes, hell, etc. In particular, reading transports man to this reality of mythical motifs by allowing him to “escape from time,” which projects him “out of his personal duration and incorporates him into other rhythms, makes him live in another ‘history.’”⁷⁶

[16] Historian of religion, and critic of Eliade, Jonathan Z. Smith presents views of his own regarding the sacred and sacred space that are relevant to the current analysis, incorporating both elements of Durkheim’s and Eliade’s work. Smith describes Eliade’s understanding of the sacred as that which is “Real” and true “Being.” It is full of power and creativity. The profane, on the other hand, is “unreal,” “absolute non-Being,” and chaotic. It is ordinary and neutral. According to Smith, Eliade has seemingly taken Durkheim’s dualist dynamic between the two, and substituted Rudolf Otto’s notion of “the holy” for Durkheim’s “more neutral and positional Sacred.”⁷⁷ However, Smith’s actual notion of “sacred space” is in more accordance with Durkheim’s view than it is with Eliade’s. According to Smith, nothing is “inherently sacred or profane.” That is, these two terms are not “substantive” categories – they are “transitive”; i.e., they are not essential categories, but, rather, situational ones.⁷⁸ Smith states that “they serve as maps and labels” – they are indications of transitive differences.⁷⁹ Therefore, for Smith, there is no need for any sort of “hierophany,” because the sacred – whatever that may be – is made sacred through ritual activity and by simply being in a sacred space. Thus, “A ritual object or action becomes sacred by having attention focused on it in a highly marked [or special] way.” Sacredness, then, is what Smith calls “a category of emplacement.” That which is “ordinary,” or

“profane” simply becomes sacred just by being in a space that has been designated as “sacred.”⁸⁰ These ritual objects, these *sacra*, as Smith refers to them, are only sacred “because they are used in a sacred place.”⁸¹ Thus, there is nothing that inherently distinguishes the sacred from the profane; things are designated as such by the space in which they are used and by ritualized activity. This line of reasoning, in conjunction with Durkheim’s understanding of the sacred, results in the fact that any space can be sacred; there are no inherent boundaries between secular (profane) rituals and sacred rituals, other than the fact that the latter are being performed in a designated sacred space. As a result, things are only sacred in their relation to other things.⁸² Since humans construct their own worlds of meaning, the distinctions that are made in space and time are the “human methods of constructing reality, of engaging the world meaningfully.” The recognition, then, of something as “sacred,” e.g., a centre, has nothing to do with locating a hierophany. Rather, it is to “participate in a mode of human creativity.”⁸³ Furthermore, for Smith, sacred places are places of “clarification,” i.e., they are places in which “all forms of communication, static, and noise...are decreased so that the exchange of information can be increased”; according to Smith, this can be accomplished through “ritual repetition and routinization.”⁸⁴

[17] Smith also interestingly adds his own interpretation of the chaotic element of the profane. For Smith, chaos is understood as being a “sacred power” in itself, but it is “frequently perceived as being sacred ‘in the wrong way.’” Although it is viewed as being in opposition to “order,” it is, nevertheless, “profoundly necessary for the very creativity that is characteristic of Eliade’s notion of the Sacred”; it is not possible for the sacred to exist without this polar opposite, one could say, which is very reminiscent of Durkheim and Berger’s views. It is, as Smith states, a “creative challenge” and a “source of possibility and vitality over against, yet inextricably related to, order and the Sacred.”⁸⁵ Along this line of reasoning, Smith notes that for cultures like the ancient Israelites, the desert (and wilderness) was not understood as being simply “neutral ground.” It was viewed as “sacred land – sacred in the ‘wrong way.’” The desert was a dangerous land full of “strange, demonic, secret powers.” However, it is sacred in the sense that it is not “ordinary” – it is a demonic realm, filled with “cosmic and human emptiness” and “confusion and chaos,” the land is “waste and void” as it was before creation;⁸⁶ this certainly brings to mind Berger’s understanding of the “potentially dangerous” attributes of the sacred, as well as Durkheim’s notion of the “impurely sacred.”

[18] In addition to having already explored a few basic understandings of the sacred and “sacred space,” some brief points offered by religion scholar Sam Gill are also relevant to the current analysis. To designate what is traditionally understood as being sacred space or time, Gill uses the term “territory,” and adds that it is also used “metaphorically to refer to a whole range of theoretical issues,” and various constructs. According to Gill, territorial distinctions are usually assumed to be “fundamental to the way humans designate meaning” and “create order.”⁸⁷ This understanding need not apply only strictly to the temporal world; cyberspace equally has a position in this line of thought. As Gill states, “Cyberspace is an incredibly complex dynamic field of play in which personal interests, personal whim, and pure coincidence greatly influence the way relationships are made, the way one travels (surfs), works, and learns.”⁸⁸ In other words, cyber territories reflect the “fundamental” way humans designate meaning and create order. After the conceptual understanding of cyberspace is briefly examined, the focus of this analysis

will then shift towards the main topic under investigation: MySpace and its relation to “sacred space.”

[19] The definition of “cyberspace” is rather elusive, as well as its actual *location*. The term itself comes from a 1984 novel by William Gibson called *Neuromancer*, and is derived from the Greek word *kyber*, which simply means “to navigate.” Gibson uses the term to designate “a navigable, digital space of networked computers accessible from computer consoles; a visual colourful, electronic, Cartesian datascape known as ‘The Matrix’ where companies and individuals interact with, and trade in, information.” In other words, the term refers to the “*conceptual* space” within the information and communication technologies, or ICTs. According to computer technician Martin Dodge, and geographer Rob Kitchin, “cyberspace does not consist of one homogeneous space.” In fact, it consists of a multitude of various “cyberspaces,” each with their own means of form and interaction; for instance, the Internet, virtual reality systems, and telecommunication systems such as telephones and fax machines.⁸⁹ Gibson’s original portrayal of cyberspace was “placeless and spaceless” – it was “non-place,” or “non-space.” However, as soon as individuals use cyberspace for social networking, it becomes a sort of space: “As soon as people use the non-space of cyberspace to interact it gains spatiality – people produce visual non-spaces to facilitate certain kinds of interaction,” and their behaviour online “is mediated by the spatial arena in which they are situated.”⁹⁰ Some have argued that cyberspace has rendered geographic space as “spaceless,” because “the contingency of space as a determinate of material practices is destroyed; geography no longer matters.” However, for Dodge and Kitchin, this is a “gross overstatement.”⁹¹ This is because cyber relations necessarily depend upon the material, geographical world for their functionality; one cannot interact at the *cyber* level if not for the existence of “the physicality and materiality of the wires,” i.e., the access points.⁹² Although cyberspace assists in dissolving the necessary link between place, identity, and community, “it does not destroy their interrelation.” In other words, even though cyberspace assists in the dissolution of traditional space-time relations, it creates its own “alternatives” to geographic space. For Dodge and Kitchin, this presents an interesting change in spatial perspective: “providing alternative, authentic places in cyberspace may help to accelerate placelessness in geographic space.”⁹³ Thus, cyberspace “presents the opportunity to engage with and construct a new spatiality, one in part divorced from real space.” The division, however, between this new space and “real” space, gets a bit distorted, because, as Dodge and Kitchin make clear, “cyberspace undermines the connection of place to identity and community by providing a space of identification free of location, and communities based on affinities rather than on shared geographical space.”⁹⁴ The “location” of these new “communities,” such as MySpace, is the cyber-spatial reality known as the Internet.

[20] The Internet can be understood as a “global network of computers that are linked together by ‘wire’” – i.e., by copper, coaxial, and glass cables, and by radio and microwaves. Every computer system that is linked to this network concurrently “resides within a nested hierarchy of networks, from its local area, to its service provider, to regional, national and international telecommunication networks.” Thus, cyberspace only emerges, so to speak, through the connections made as a result of the Internet. According to Dodge and Kitchin, the Internet has been compared to the human brain, because just like the brain, “The sum of these nodes and their connections is greater than their parts, forming a network that enables people to communicate and share information”; likewise, the millions of neurons and “interconnecting nerve ‘wires’”

that exist in the brain, form the human consciousness and the capacity for thought and memory.⁹⁵ One of the things that the Internet also makes accessible is the World Wide Web (WWW). The WWW can simply be defined as a medium that “consists of multimedia data (mostly text and static graphics but also sound, animation, movie clips and virtual spaces) which are stored as hypermedia documents (documents that contain links to other pages of information).” To access these “pages,” however, one needs an Internet “browser,” such as Apple’s Safari, Mozilla’s Firefox, Microsoft’s Internet Explorer, or Google’s Chrome. The WWW, which is where the next part of this investigation is *located*, allows users to explore various things, “without concern for their specific location in the network or in geographic space.”⁹⁶

[21] Before exploring the way in which the cyber-social network MySpace is analogous to, and functions as, traditional notions of sacred space, a few relevant remarks about popular culture and the sacrality of secular objects and activities must be mentioned. In regard to the process of secularization,⁹⁷ Conrad Ostwalt notes that things not commonly viewed as religious “can and do participate in the communication of religious meaning when traditional religions wane and even when they do not.” Moreover, he states, “in the context of religious evolution as a result of the secularization process, we can think about literature, film, music, art, and other cultural products...as vehicles that carry and transport our religious longings, rituals, and beliefs”;⁹⁸ cyberspace can certainly be understood as such a “vehicle.” For Ostwalt, this is one of the reasons why the traditional boundaries that separate religion and culture, i.e., “the sacred and the secular,” are progressively “blurred” in postmodernity.⁹⁹ Ostwalt also adds his own understanding of “sacred space” that is crucial for what remains to be addressed in this analysis: “it is my feeling that places can constitute sacred space through their functions, not just through their proposed or planned purpose.”¹⁰⁰ Ostwalt also describes seven distinct characteristics that he argues pertain to sacred space, three of which are particularly relevant to the study at hand. The first is that the western world no longer understands God as that which permeates throughout sacred space – God is no longer the “otherness.” Instead, the actual place itself is viewed as the “other”; “holiness is not contained within a sacred place, holiness is the otherness of place.”¹⁰¹ The second is that sacred spaces “assume and promote a participatory element.” That is, sacred spaces are made as such through the “proper participation of those constituting the space.” And third, traditional sacred elements, such as relics or saints, are not needed in order for a space to be sacred. The reason for this is because the blurring of the line between the sacred and the profane, by means of secularization, has allowed for the “sacralizing” of the “formerly secular.”¹⁰² With this understanding in mind, the analysis will now proceed to investigate MySpace, and highlight the various ways in which it functions as “sacred space.”

[22] In light of the statistics reported earlier, the importance of this social network is easily apparent. As Stephen D. O’Leary notes, the Internet is creating a “culture, or a complex of cultures, that both reflects and differs from the larger technological and political culture in which it is housed.”¹⁰³ It should, then, come as no surprise that “as more people come to spend more and more of their time online, they have begun to devise ways to fulfill the religious needs and identities that form such an important part of the fabric of our society.”¹⁰⁴ According to Christine Rosen, social networking sites, such as MySpace, “have become a major cultural presence.” Moreover, as researcher Rob Nyland at Brigham Young University found in a fairly recent survey, “heavy users” of these types of sites “feel less socially involved with the community around them,” i.e., their submergence in MySpace overwhelms their entire lives.¹⁰⁵ While online

social networks like MySpace are relatively “young” in the cyber world, the increasing popularity and importance placed in them, as the above statistics show, displays the increasing value that individuals are placing in these networking sites. In this last part of the analysis, all of the relevant correlations between traditional notions of sacred space and the virtual “world” of MySpace will be made. The notion of the sacred implicitly brings to mind the notion of the “religious.” However, this analysis is not concerned with the religiosity, or *religious* functionality, of MySpace. It will simply expose particular correlations and parallels that render MySpace as analogous to traditional views of “sacred space.” Moreover, to clarify what is meant by the use of the word “traditional” in the lines above, reference to the various aspects of the sacred, as assigned by both Émile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade (as well as Peter L. Berger and Jonathan Z. Smith) is to be made – not simply one over the other, for they all constitute important elements in the assessment of “sacred space.” In other words, correlations will be made between all of these definitions and understandings of the sacred, in its relation to “sacred space.” Moreover, Conrad Ostwalt’s views regarding “sacred space” will be referenced in order to further corroborate the forthcoming claims, as well as make them more relevant to contemporary understandings.

[23] To begin with, as Durkheim states, “anything can be sacred.”¹⁰⁶ As noted earlier, the extent of this “anything,” “varies indefinitely.” Moreover, according to Berger, the sacred resides in “objects of experience,” and it is doubtful that anyone would deny that cyber activity falls outside the realm of experience. Additionally, Berger states that something profane can simply become sacred by being “infused” with “sacred power.” Therefore, there is no inherent quality that designates MySpace as being only “profane,” i.e., as being unable to function as a sacred space. The creation of personal MySpace profiles parallels Smith’s understanding that humans construct their own worlds of meaning; the fact that they may be then classified as sacred also correlates to Durkheim’s reasoning. One’s profile, then, becomes meaningful and sacred, not because of some sort of hierophany, but because of the simple act of “human creativity.” According to Meredith Underwood, “The internet, like all elements of popular culture (and of religious systems), is neither inherently liberating nor inherently oppressive. It becomes one or the other – or some combination of both – only in the context of its ongoing actualization and use.”¹⁰⁷ In other words, it is neutral territory, awaiting the human creative impulse. Following Durkheim’s line of reasoning, the “pure” can be made out of the “impure.” That is, the non-space (unordered, chaos) of cyberspace (to take Gibson’s original position) is the source, so to speak, of MySpace. The sacrality of this chaotic non-space, as Smith and Berger note, is what allows the founding of sacred space. Thus, MySpace can be understood as being akin to the “pure” sacredness of space, which came into being out of the “impure” sacrality of non-space (general cyberspace). Evidently then, this represents one of the types of “breaks” in cyberspace that Dodge and Kitchin describe. Cyberspace is not homogeneous, just as Eliade describes space for “religious man”; it is non-homogeneous, in that it features “breaks” whereby the sacred is made known. MySpace can then be understood as representing a type of detachment from “the surrounding cosmic milieu” of cyberspace, which certainly makes it “qualitatively different.”

[24] Now, as reference to Eliade has been made, one may begin to wonder where the role of hierophanies comes into play here. Or, rather, one may be wondering how the sacred can manifest itself through a cyber-social network. Recalling Eliade’s explanation that sacred space can be *constructed*, if no hierophany is present, solves this dilemma. Moreover, Smith’s views

express the fact that something becomes sacred by being used in a “special” way; i.e., something is only sacred because it is made as such through ritualized activity, and/or by simply being in a sacred setting. In other words, it is constructed based upon the rules of how this is to be done (the cosmological rules, Eliade would say), which, in the case of MySpace, are the guidelines and “rules” that direct one’s profile’s construction. The argument follows, then, that MySpace has become sacred by being ritually and routinely used (the statistics above display the importance placed in it by the number of users and the attention given to it) in the realm of cyberspace; its “special” meaning has constituted a “break” from the rest of the space constituting the cyber world. One must also recall that according to Durkheim, “the sacred character assumed by an object” is added to it, i.e., “*it is superimposed upon it.*” Thus, in this instance, following Durkheim’s line of reasoning, Eliade’s dependence upon hierophanies is not an issue. Moreover, recalling the sacrality of the chaotic in Smith’s work, one can again take the position that the “pure” has simply been created from the “impure.” As Eliade states, when traditional “holy places” lose their “religious efficacy,” people simply discover other means to represent the centre of their world – the foundation of the sacred space; O’Leary’s understanding is also applicable here. And, further recalling Ostwalt’s reasoning, regarding popular cultural forms taking the place of traditional religious elements (in this case, sacred elements), MySpace’s role as such is easily admissible. Eliade’s example of the Achilpa, and the carrying of their sacred pole (their *axis mundi*), is particularly relevant. In the contemporary setting of cyber-social networks, the carrying around of one’s laptop computer (or PDA/cellular phone/netbook) has an interesting parallel here: the laptop, for the individual MySpace user, is his or her point of access to sacred space and time (a desktop computer would fit this role as well, but the idea is to follow the symbolism in Eliade’s example) – it is one’s way of *communicating* with the sacred. Its destruction, therefore, would certainly ruin the individual’s ability to access the sacred, which would destroy the individual’s capability of communicating with the sacred; the individual would cease to be *real* (today, one could obviously just use another computer, or buy a new one, but the Achilpa only had one pole, so the symbolism in this correlation should be in regard to the destruction of all computers, since they are all the “spawn,” so to speak, of an original technological innovation).

[25] Brenda E. Brasher notices that cyberspace “transmits a multiple sense of time.” It expands and compresses time in a way that seems to create a timeless atmosphere, as well as make daylong experiences seem as if they had been lived over a lifetime; Brasher even states that it is “not uncommon for a virtual acquaintance met a few weeks ago to seem like an old friend.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, for Brasher, “Cyberspace is sacred time,” because, “It imaginatively endows those who encounter it with alternative time experiences.”¹⁰⁹ This “alternative” experience is reminiscent of Eliade’s notion of sacred time, in that it constitutes a “break” in the non-homogeneity of time. Furthermore, it relates to Eliade’s claim that time in sacred space does not “pass” in the usual sense and is “never exhausted.” However, Eliade states that sacred time is created by the gods, and that within sacred time, one is in the presence of the gods – whether one is aware of this or not. The “gods,” in this instance, can be correlated to the founders and creators of MySpace, as symbolized by Tom Anderson’s own personal profile, and the fact that he is the first “friend” of all new users. Thus, each individual is in the presence of these “gods” by having Tom as a “friend” on his or her MySpace account. Individuals may not always be consciously aware of his presence, because he may not necessarily be listed (that is, placed) in one’s “Top Friends” list; he

would then remain *hidden* from the user, as well as other users who navigate to one's profile, off of the main page of the profile.

[26] Both Durkheim and Eliade view the passage from the profane to the sacred as possible by means of certain rites or ceremonies. Ritualistically speaking, the typing of a username and password, along with the click of the "Login" button, are clearly ritualized and routine activities that transport the individual into another "time"; the actual creation of an account and profile is also ritualistic in the sense that it "initiates" the user into the world of MySpace, and serves as an act of "consecration." The "Login Screen" also functions in a way that is analogous to an Eliadean "threshold"; acting as a *vehicle* for transportation between modes of being, it is from this *location* where "passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible." Along this same line of reasoning, the creation of an account and profile parallels the "mimicking" behaviour that Eliade ascribes to consecrating sacred space; the organization of the space "repeat[s] the paradigmatic work of the gods," i.e., it mimics the primordial creation out of chaos by the gods. The original "consecration," then, can be understood as a macrocosm – occurring in August of 2003 – and the personal creation of accounts and profiles as various microcosms; the original consecration organized a vast networking space where users can create their own, smaller networks, while personal account and profile creation involves the organization of a much smaller network of immediate acquaintances, modeled after the original. According to Durkheim, the individual is understood to have actually "died," as he or she enters into that which is sacred, only to be "reborn" into a sacred existence; he refers to it as a "metamorphosis." Moreover, as Rosen states, "Here [in MySpace], the old arbiters of community – geographic location, family, role, or occupation – have little effect on relationships."¹¹⁰ That is, one's status in the profane world is unimportant, as a new world has been founded; one receives a new identity, i.e., the old "you" dies and the new "you" is born. According to O'Leary, one undergoes a particular sort of transformation in cyberspace – an "assumption of pseudonyms and the option of anonymity," which allows "a previously unknown freedom to construct an identity divorced from gender, age, or physical appearance."¹¹¹ MySpace is filled with ritualized activity (which, for Smith, is enough to designate it as being sacred, as long as the rituals are directed in a "special" way, and the apparent value with which users fill MySpace surely signifies something "special"), ranging from the ritual of "comment-courtesy," i.e., commenting on another's profile, pictures, or blogs (a portmanteau of "web log," which usually contains commentary or news on a particular subject) if that individual has commented on one's own, to the constant filling-out of "surveys" and chain-posts on MySpace's bulletin boards. Durkheim's ritual "rules of conduct" also come to mind, as well as the prohibitions involved in his understanding of the sacred. Breaking these rules in MySpace, i.e., not following its guidelines for use (for instance, displaying inappropriate material on one's profile) can result in being "punished" by Tom; one's profile, for example, could be deleted and one would then be banished, so to speak, from the sacred space – forced to live in "absolute non-Being." The other side of this argument, however, casts these "virtual rituals" into a rather negative light. As O'Leary reports, if scholars continue to understand ritual as being "conspicuously physiological," then rituals taking place in cyberspace will necessarily be regarded as "unreal" in comparison to their physiological counterparts. Although, as O'Leary states, "important elements of traditional ritual are lost without physical presence," one should consider "what ritual *gains* in the virtual environment and what meanings the participants are able to derive from these practices, such that they will gather again and again to perform cyber-rituals together."¹¹² Even though the efficacy of cyber-

rituals is apparent throughout this analysis, they are, nevertheless, “constantly faced with the evidence of...[their] own quality as constructed, as arbitrary, and as artificial.” However, as O’Leary states, ritual efficacy “is affirmed, time and time again, even in the face of a full, self-conscious awareness of its artificiality.”¹¹³

[27] According to Eliade, something is sacred insofar as it “embodies” something other than itself, i.e., if its importance lies in not what it is, in the *profane* sense, but in what it is sacredly manifesting (recall that the stone is still a stone, but that aspect of it is irrelevant). One could say, then, that MySpace does not simply “embody” a part of cyberspace or the Internet. It “embodies,” i.e., “reveals,” the essence of people – its users – through their profiles; along this line of reasoning, it could then be argued that there is a sort of self-deification involved with the creation of MySpace profiles. As Rosen states,

one’s entree into the social networking world is through the revelation of personal information...Its users are committed to self-exposure. The creation and conspicuous consumption of intimate details and images of one’s own and others’ lives is the main activity in the online social networking world. There is no room for reticence; there is only revelation.¹¹⁴

Moreover, these “revelations,” which can take place through the simple summaries of one’s interests, or through the “confessional” nature of certain blogs (some individuals utilize them in the way that one would use a diary or journal), can be understood as constituting a type of “sacred history” or personal myth. For Eliade, a myth explains to people how something was accomplished or came to be. Thus, as displayed throughout the various sections, or “blurbs,” of one’s profile, a personal myth can be seen as explaining one’s self in a number of ways. As Eliade states, myths speak “only of *realities*, of what *really* happened.” Their functional role as factual tales of reality corresponds directly to the nature of these personal “histories.” Furthermore, as Eliade notes, reading can transport one into another “time,” incorporating one into other “rhythms” and histories. This can be illustrated by one reading the content of another’s “personal myth”; reading about the individual, and mentally picturing the content of the “myth,” results in the incorporation of the individual into this “sacred history.”

[28] Along this same line of reasoning, the aspects of communication in sacred space are also evident in MySpace. According to Smith, sacred spaces allow the “exchange of information” to be increased. This can be seen in the vast amount of information that a user can display on his or her profile. As Rosen states, one can “know more about a potential acquaintance in a moment than you might have learned about a flesh-and-blood friend in a month.”¹¹⁵ Thus, MySpace profiles succeed in increasing the exchange of information between one another, by displaying the ins-and-outs, so to speak, of an individual; this can range from simple interests, religious and political party affiliations, and tastes in music, to schools and universities one has attended, as well as various occupations held.

[29] Another feature of MySpace is that it is community-based, i.e., it allows individuals to form online *communities*. The option for users to join various “groups” exhibits this feature quite well; these “groups” are equivalent to what are traditionally recognized as clubs. In this regard, and in accordance with Durkheim’s views, the “community” can be seen as helping to establish a sort

of sacred character; “the sanctity of a thing is due to the collective sentiment of which it is the object.” Thus, the collective value and meaning instilled in MySpace sanctifies it as such. Furthermore, following Berger’s reasoning, this collective social identity can also be regarded as sacred. For Berger, social identity, as a whole, is sacred because it is “willed by the gods.” It can certainly be said that the “gods” will the various MySpace profiles into being as well (recall that “gods,” in this instance, refers to the original founders of MySpace, as represented by everyone’s “friend” Tom). Thus, following Berger’s line of reasoning, it can be argued that MySpace exhibits sacred characteristics just through its existence. Berger also states, however, that sacrality can potentially be dangerous (for instance, chaotic, which was briefly examined above). This correlates to the fact that some individuals become “addicted” to MySpace – using it *too much*, one could say. Rosen, in particular, has noted the various “dangers” associated with MySpace: according to Nyland, “as individuals use social networking more for entertainment, their level of social involvement decreases.” Additionally, communications professor Qingwen Dong at the University of the Pacific, along with his colleagues, found that “those who engage in romantic communication over MySpace tend to have low levels of both emotional intelligence and self-esteem.”¹¹⁶ Thus, it is evident that the dangerous attributes associated with cyber-social network use correlate in a very interesting way to Berger’s claims. On the other hand, it could also be argued that these apparent “dangers” are not actually all that dangerous, if MySpace is being experienced as a sacred space; being completely submerged in it would signify a complete submergence in what is ultimately “real.”

[30] All of these correlations and parallels attest to the fact that MySpace functions in a way similar to that of traditional sacred space; this is also grounded in Ostwalt’s understanding of sacred space, which he defines in a functional manner. The three characteristics mentioned earlier, in regard to Ostwalt’s understanding, further ground this position: sacredness *is* the “otherness” of the space, not some entity or force permeating throughout (even though one could make the Tom/god analogy); sacred spaces are made as such through the “proper participation” of those occupying them (Durkheim’s “rules of conduct,” one could reason); and secularization has eliminated the need for traditional sacred elements to be present, or to be the reason for the “consecration” of the space (cyberspace, in itself, corresponds to this characteristic – no traditionally held sacred elements play a part in the various “consecrations” that take place in this “world”). Recalling Gill’s view that territorial distinctions (which would include such cyber constructs as MySpace) are “fundamental to the way humans designate meaning,” it can easily be seen that MySpace functions in a way that fulfills this necessity.

[31] Since the correlations and parallels made throughout the analysis between MySpace and traditional notions of sacred space reflect a variety of positions and views, it should be noted that the intention has not been to establish a specific, single view or definition of sacred space that encompasses such modern constructs as cyber-social networks. Instead, the goal has been to present specific views and understandings of “sacred space,” and relate particular aspects of each of them to the cyber construct MySpace. In other words, the fact that an assortment of correlations and parallels have been used, which span multiple understandings of “sacred space,” should not be understood as an inadequacy in developing a single set of correlations that correspond to a single understanding of “sacred space.” Rather, the various correlations and parallels have been presented together in order to show how MySpace relates to each of them. Based on the above correlations and parallels, in conjunction with functionalist definitions of

“sacred space” (such as the one provided by Ostwalt), it can be seen that MySpace certainly reflects, and functions as, traditional notions of “sacred space.” However, the recognition of nontraditional “sacred spaces” and sacred elements surely includes more arenas than just cyberspace. Recalling Ostwalt’s quote from earlier, “in the context of religious evolution as a result of the secularization process, we can think about literature, film, music, art, and other cultural products...as vehicles that carry and transport our religious longings, rituals, and beliefs.” Thus, although MySpace represents an adequate example of this evolutionary process, it is certainly not alone.

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¹ "About Us," MySpace.com, <http://www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.aboutus>.

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³ Patricia Sellers, "MySpace Cowboys," *Fortune* (2006), http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/09/04/8384727/index.htm.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Myspace.com–Site Info from Alexa," Alexa Internet, Inc., <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/myspace.com>.

⁶ "Facebook.com–Site Info from Alexa," Alexa Internet, Inc., <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/facebook.com>.

⁷ "Twitter.com–Site Info from Alexa," Alexa Internet, Inc., <http://www.alexa.com/siteinfo/twitter.com>.

⁸ The reader must also be aware that at the original time of authorship (Fall 2007), MySpace had been the sixth most popular website, globally, and third most popular in the United States (well above Facebook, at the time). Thus, this was another one of the reasons why the original focus was placed on MySpace, as opposed to the apparently more popular of the two.

⁹ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (London: Hollen Street Press Ltd., 1954), 37.

¹⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹¹ Ibid., 39.

¹² Ibid., 37.

¹³ Ibid., 38.

¹⁴ Ibid., 229.

¹⁵ Ibid., 413.

¹⁶ Ibid., 317.

¹⁷ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹⁹ Ibid., 317.

²⁰ Ibid., 40.

²¹ Ibid., 41.

²² Ibid., 301.

²³ Ibid., 302.

²⁴ Ibid.; see n. 9.

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- ²⁵ Ibid., 409.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 410.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 411.
- ²⁸ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 25.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 95.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 26.
- ³¹ Ibid., 39.
- ³² Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1959), 10-11.
- ³³ Ibid., 13.
- ³⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, trans. Philip Mairet (Kansas: Sheed Andrews and McMeel, Inc., 1961), 40.
- ³⁵ Eliade, *The Sacred*, 11.
- ³⁶ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1958), 11.
- ³⁷ Eliade, *The Sacred*, 11; Eliade, *Patterns*, 12.
- ³⁸ Eliade, *The Sacred*, 12.
- ³⁹ Eliade, *Patterns*, 13.
- ⁴⁰ Eliade, *The Sacred*, 12.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 13.
- ⁴² Ibid., 20.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 21.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 20.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 21.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 22.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 26.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 28.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 25.
- ⁵¹ Eliade, *Images*, 50.
- ⁵² Ibid., 51.
- ⁵³ Eliade, *The Sacred*, 30.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 32.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 38-39.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 39.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 58.
- ⁵⁸ Eliade, *Images*, 51.
- ⁵⁹ Eliade, *Patterns*, 385.
- ⁶⁰ Eliade, *Images*, 52.
- ⁶¹ Eliade, *Patterns*, 448.
- ⁶² Ibid., 382.
- ⁶³ Eliade, *The Sacred*, 64.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 202-203.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 43.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 33.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 57.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 68.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., 69.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 71.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 79.
- ⁷² Ibid., 91.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 80.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 94.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 95.

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- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 205.
- ⁷⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Netherlands: E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1978), 91.
- ⁷⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 55; *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 104-105.
- ⁷⁹ Smith, *To Take Place*, 105.
- ⁸⁰ Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 55; *To Take Place*, 104.
- ⁸¹ Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 56; *To Take Place*, 106.
- ⁸² Smith, *To Take Place*, 105-106.
- ⁸³ Sam Gill, "Territory," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 305.
- ⁸⁴ Smith, *Imagining Religion*, 54.
- ⁸⁵ Smith, *Map is Not Territory*, 97.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 109.
- ⁸⁷ Gill, 298.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., 311.
- ⁸⁹ Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin, *Mapping Cyberspace* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 200.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., 14.
- ⁹² Ibid., 15.
- ⁹³ Ibid., 17.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., 202.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., 3.
- ⁹⁷ Secularization can be described as "the translation, transformation, 'worlding,' or simple negation of religious categories and relations." Additionally, some scholars make the observation that the "emotional and psychological energies formerly exercised in religious activity" can be seen to have simply "migrated elsewhere"; see Vincent P. Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, & Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1, 26.
- ⁹⁸ Conrad Ostwalt, *Secular Steeples: Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2003), 12.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., 29.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 78.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., 79.
- ¹⁰² Ibid., 81.
- ¹⁰³ Stephen D. O'Leary, "Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 4 (1996): 782.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Christine Rosen, "What Are Facebook Friends For?" *Christian Science Monitor* (2007), <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1010/p09s01-coop.html>.
- ¹⁰⁶ To escape the redundancy of multiple citations for the quotations that follow, the reader is directed to refer to the original context of their use in the preceding text for the bibliographic references.
- ¹⁰⁷ Meredith Underwood, "Lost In Cyberspace?: Gender, Difference, and the Internet 'Utopia,'" in *Religion and Popular Culture In America*, ed. Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 277-278.
- ¹⁰⁸ Brenda E. Brasher, *Give Me That Online Religion* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2001), 47.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 49.
- ¹¹⁰ Rosen.
- ¹¹¹ O'Leary, 805.
- ¹¹² Ibid., 795.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., 804.
- ¹¹⁴ Rosen, "Facebook Friends."
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid.