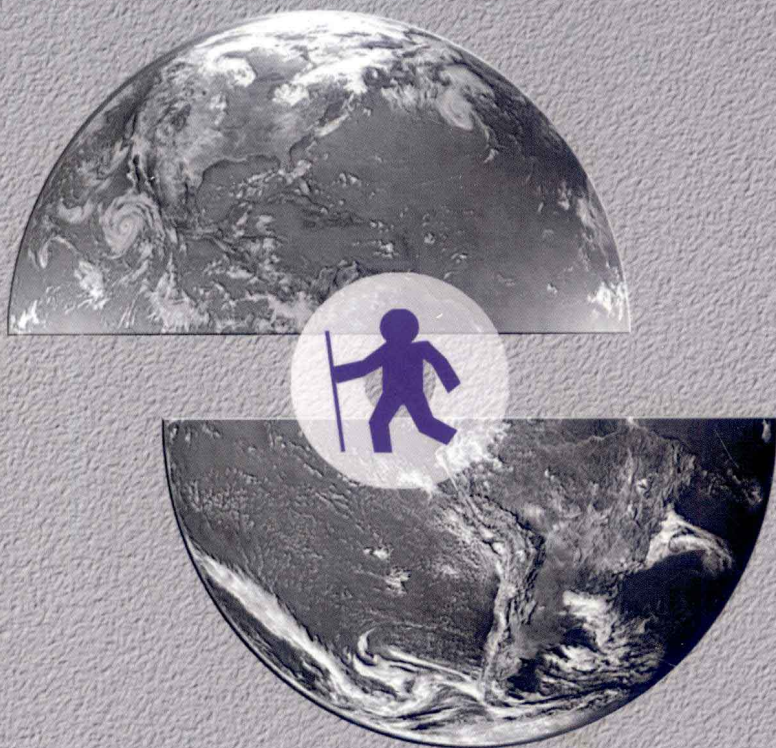

TOURISM ETHICS



DAVID A. FENNELL

ASPECTS OF TOURISM 30

Series Editors: Chris Cooper (*University of Queensland, Australia*),
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and Dallen Timothy (*Arizona State University, USA*)

Tourism Ethics

David A. Fennell

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*To my parents, John and Nancy Fennell
for inspiring me to live your philosophy of 'roots and wings'*

*'Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone;
therefore, we are saved by love.'* (Reinhold Niebuhr)

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Preface

In writing a book on tourism ethics it would seem appropriate, if not a bit embarrassing, to come clean on certain matters. In a previous publication I reported observing tourists pilfer small pieces of sandstone on the surface of Australia's Ayers Rock. Lest we think that I occupy some lofty moral position as the author of this book, we can easily put this nonsense to bed by my admittance that one of the culprits was me. Can I take it back? No. But what is most encouraging about the whole event is that it has been bothering me since 1987, the year in which I committed the act. In reflection, I justified my actions from the apparent need to savour the memory of Ayers Rock forever, by having a tangible bit of this renowned attraction for my mantle. In reality, however, the act was more than just the need to savour a memory. As I think back, it was also about a novice traveller trying to demonstrate to others how extensively he had travelled. The act was made easier, in my opinion, as it was based on what might be termed a collective, consensual and temporary state of self-interest, demonstrating that ethics is very much situational. A sense of mischief and 'adventure', however, soon turned to disappointment as I didn't have the sense to protect the rock (sandstone) over the course of my six-month trip, thus demonstrating my limited knowledge of geology. In a matter of weeks, the rock was reduced to sand, showing me how erosion works through 'natural' processes, rendering it both useless to me as well as to anyone else who might have been presented with the opportunity to view it.

I make light of the situation but it is serious enough to demonstrate that: (1) the natural resources we use for our pleasure are threatened in innumerable ways; and (2) the limits of such resources are tested daily by the Golden Hordes, the majority of whom often have little knowledge of their actions. This has been proven time and time again in decades of tourism research. But where has this research taken us? We know the result, indeed we can easily predict it, but we still have trouble addressing, or worse yet, stemming the tides of negative change. In this regard, we need to be vigilant in heeding the words of McKercher who

has noted that our field has been 'entrenched in an intellectual time warp that is up to 30 years old' (McKercher, 1999: 425). The friction (impacts) of this time warp (indeed, new books continue to surface on impacts), has pulled us far behind many other disciplines that have progressed further both conceptually and theoretically through an interdisciplinary agenda based on ethics. Ethics is serious stuff. It has been on the minds of people for thousands of years. Not so in tourism, however, where ethics is barely a decade old.

In recognising the immense void in ethics in our field, I have attempted to take the reader to a new destination; one where the waters are just now being tested. This has necessitated the development of a book that delves heavily into theory. Even those aspects that are of an applied nature are tied to theoretical models and methods. This renders the book less applicable to the younger undergraduate crowd and more applicable to the senior group, as well as graduate students and researchers in tourism. Having said this, every effort was made to be as accessible as possible with the theoretical content within. I should also note that, although it is a book for students and researchers, it is as much a book for the author, as selfish as this may seem. Taken from the existential domain, in order to be free we need to be personally authentic. This book is a tangible result of this authenticity; about my past, the present, and perhaps where I would like to see myself in the future. In being free to make this leap, however, we must also be willing to take responsibility for our actions. I am fully prepared to take responsibility (hence, the apparent need to come clean on the Ayers Rock situation) for what might be too much of a leap in faith in the traditional sense. With this in mind, it is the purpose of this book to:

- (1) Introduce moral concepts and issues into the realm of tourism in a comprehensive yet accessible fashion. This will entail an analysis of ethical systems and theories as well as a link to many ethical situations that exist in the field of tourism.
- (2) Examine ethics from the perspective of many more established disciplines for the purpose of diversifying tourism scholarship. Indeed, this is critical if we are to emerge from the present intellectual stagnancy, as noted earlier.
- (3) Develop a theoretical and conceptual template for tourism that provides a foundation for researching, planning, developing and managing tourism on the basis of ethics. In this context, the book points to the fact that there is an absence of an underlying ethical basis for critical thought in tourism.

The intent is to formulate these ideas, theories and issues for a readership that might not be well versed in ethics or moral philosophy; two

terms that to some theorists are synonymous and to others distinct (the latter being the more general), as discussed in Chapter 3. Indeed, this is an area of thought that can be extremely deep. The only requirement I ask of the reader is a willingness to look upon the many positive and negative aspects of the tourism industry from the side of ethics. In doing so we may yet uncover more intriguing ways to study a field that continues to challenge us in theory and practice, and in time and space. It should also be noted that the approach used here afforded me the opportunity to study ethics with an open mind and not as a slave to any one discipline. This method was critical in seeking a diversity of explanations that would allow for an enhanced view of the place of ethics in tourism, in efforts to help pull us out of our theoretical cul-de-sac.

The book is organised into 12 chapters, which move from the theoretical to the applied, and back. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the tourism industry, with a particular focus on sustainable tourism, alternative tourism, impacts and the current research on tourism and ethics. It follows with an examination of some new realities and moralities in tourism. Chapter 2 briefly summarises the rich foundation of literature on the cultural and biological basis of human nature. The argument carried forward is that we must have a firm grasp of human nature in order to better understand the role of ethics as a fundamental aspect of our natures. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the evolution of ethics. Chapter 3 focuses on the basis of ethical discourse, including a discussion of classical antiquity and philosophical terminology (i.e. philosophy, morality and ethics, values and norms), absolutist theories, such as deontology and teleology, as well as existentialism as one of the predominant subjectivist ethical theories. Chapter 4 takes a more applied look at ethics and the circle of morality, justices, rights, responsibility and free will. The bulk of the work in Chapter 5 focuses on an illustration of the history of trade as a fundamental aspect of our human natures, including aspects of self-interest and cooperation. Politics, power and capitalism are examined, along with implications for tourism and development in lesser developed countries. The chapter ends with an examination of social status and the culture of consumption, laying the foundation for a more comprehensive treatment of business and ethics in Chapter 6. Here, corporatism is compared with individualism, and corporate responsibility is examined along with trust and culture within organisations. The chapter also looks at business ethics, and ends with some ethical responses that have taken place in tourism, including marketing, fair trade and pro-poor tourism.

Chapter 7 centres on ethics and the natural world through an examination of ecosystems and ecosystem services, stewardship, values and rights, and environmental ethics. Several definitions of environmental

ethics are discussed, as well as a number of different models of human–environment relationships. In Chapter 8, the focus switches to what might be termed broad-based issues and concepts that have an effect on tourism. The discussion includes work on major ethical responses in tourism, including common pool resources, social traps and governance, as well as accreditation, best practice benchmarking and the precautionary principle. Chapter 9 deals specifically with codes of ethics for tourism, and includes work in other fields, mostly business, in an attempt to provide further theoretical and applied guidance for tourism studies. Pros and cons of codes of ethics are discussed, along with a code development process and a comprehensive ethical programme. The chapter ends with an examination of the World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics. In Chapter 10, a number of models and methods of moral decision-making are introduced, which are later applied to a series of different ethical dilemmas in Chapter 11. The intent of both chapters is to show that ethical dilemmas in tourism can be examined in a number of different ways. The final chapter, 12, uses the concepts of interdisciplinary, knowledge and complexity in the development of a comprehensive ethical framework for tourism. This framework builds upon a number of key themes that are introduced throughout the course of the book. These include: (1) current knowledge in tourism, (2) micro interactions (those that are indicative of the day-to-day and face-to-face interactions of people involved in tourism), (3) macro interactions (more broadly based issues in tourism), (4) the importance of knowledge in the humanities (e.g. ethics) in solving tourism-related problems and (5) the theoretical contributions of biology in addressing tourism issues. Only through an enhanced understanding of these five different domains, it is argued, can we begin the task of assembling a base of knowledge for the purpose of more clearly addressing the various impacts that continue to shackle the tourism field.

In this book I have, in the words of Humphrey (1992), 'a big fish to fry', for much of what appears in the pages to follow is relatively new for students of tourism, at least by virtue of what does not appear in our journals. I make no claim as to the size or weight of the fish (as did Humphrey), only that it succeeds in getting students and researchers to adopt some new techniques for effective angling. In striving to make this happen, I have had to angle in many different ponds, which has enlightened me in ways unimaginable. But I also subscribe to the words of the evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr (1988), who, in acknowledging his own limitations as a non-expert in the field of ethics, chose to steer himself clear of finding definitive answers on ethics by electing to ask open questions. In this regard, it is perhaps salient to acknowledge Rawls, who observed that we learn about moral philosophy by studying the noted figures who have gone before us: Kant, Aristotle, Nietzsche and

so on (Rawls, 2000). If we are lucky, we find a way to go beyond them. While Rawls had the tools to do this, I make no such claim – only a keen interest to understand, if only a bit, an area that is both fascinating and sorely lacking in tourism and that, if given its due regard, has the potential to emerge as the next main research platform in our field.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Tourism can not be explained unless we understand man, the human being
Przeclawski, 1996: 239

Introduction

This chapter discusses the background behind the tendency of tourism researchers to examine impacts as the traditional root of ethical issues in tourism. The chapter also analyses alternative tourism and sustainable tourism paradigms as the field's most frequently used means by which to alleviate the negative impacts of the industry. A brief summary of work on tourism and ethics provides a generalised snapshot of the range of studies undertaken to date in addressing ethical issues in tourism. The chapter further discusses the negative backlash that has come about regarding the so-called 'new tourism', and sets the stage for the discussion in later chapters on human nature and ethics, and how these relate more specifically to tourism.

Tourism Impacts

One of the longest-standing traditions in tourism research, which is almost universal in our books and academic papers, is the necessity of discussing at the outset the idea that tourism is the world's foremost economic engine. This is natural from at least two perspectives. The first is that it seems to legitimise the importance of tourism through an approximation of its overall magnitude regarding foreign receipts, employment and other such indicators. Second, it demonstrates that, apart from its position as the formidable economic giant, there are associated costs, which have been discussed almost universally as socio-cultural, economic and ecological impacts.

The concern over tourism impacts originates from the 1950s, when the International Union of Official Travel Organizations' (the precursor to the WTO) Commission for Travel Development first initiated discussions