Dark Tourism and Ethics: constructing morality through a mortal gaze

Philip Stone, Dr, University of Central Lancashire
Dark Tourism and Ethics: constructing morality through a mortal gaze

Dr. Philip R. Stone
University of Central Lancashire (UCLan)
Faculty of Management
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 2HE
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1772 894900
Fax: +44(0)1772 892927

Email: pstone@uclan.ac.uk

Chapter for forthcoming book:

Abstract

Dark tourism as the act of travel to sites, attractions or exhibitions associated with real or recreated death has raised particular moral quandaries. Not least, moral commentaries often focus upon relative conceptions of what is good or bad in representing tragic history. Thus, the seemingly moral panic that envelopes dark tourism provides for a parochial discourse that does not include discussion of constructing post-conventional morality. Indeed, the economisation of society, generally, and the secularisation of contemporary society in particular, has given rise to fundamental questions of changing moral orders. Consequently, a Giddensian perspective of morality argues that morality has been sequestered into the back regions of life; whereby direct contact with existential issues that link the individual lifespan to broad issues of morality and finitude are rare and fleeting. As a result, contemporary society is seen as morally arid, in which the Self is ontologically threatened with radical doubt and meaninglessness. However, an increasing commodification and aestheticisation of death through dark tourism has raised issues of how morality is collectively conveyed and individually constructed. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to offer a structural analysis of morality and, in doing so, address apparent fissures between the secular sequestration of morality and its institutional reconstruction through dark tourism. Ultimately, the chapter provides a conceptual framework in which to locate the ethical consumption of dark tourism, as well as outlining the processes of constructing a new moral order.

Keywords:
dark tourism, ethics, morality, relativism, secularisation