

## **Enchantment: Feeding Care within the Cracks of Ecotourism**

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### **Introduction**

The foundation of ecotourism—what holds it together as an experience, concept, and ethical ideal for tourism encounters and enterprises—is fractured. We are referring of course to the significance of “nature” as the life blood of ecotourism from its earliest articulations in the 1980s by Ceballos-Lascuráin (1987) to the more contemporary and regularly referenced definition advanced by The International Ecotourism Society (2020). While community development, learning, and responsible travel have been recurrent dimensions of ecotourism, the common core idea of nature is what steers the moral values and experiential desires of ecotourists and the conservation orientation of ecotourism operators and enterprises (Donohoe & Needham, 2006). Nature is what we are told and sold to care about in ecotourism. Nature is, however, no stable, homogenous, or apolitical thing, as scholars from across the social and natural sciences have demonstrated for some time (e.g., Barad, 2007; Cronon, 1996; Haraway, 1991). Indeed, nature is (and historically has been) tethered to discursive and material relations that constitute colonialist and capitalist systems, and is also representative of worldly phenomena (from flora and fauna to weather patterns and geological dynamics) that actively shape the social, cultural, and ecological systems that enable, and give meaning to, life as we know it. If the ontology of nature is shaky and suspicious and shifting, what else might we latch on to as an ethical anchoring for ecotourism? How might we enact an ethics of ecotourism without reifying some sort of transcendental or static vision like nature? How do we forge care within a broken and transforming system? In this chapter, we explore the potential for ecotourism encounters to serve as spaces of enchantment and care for more than the human world. We explore how

enchantment might energise us in our capacities for compassion and care, even as we are emplaced in the mix and midst of things—including those things that are ugly, damaged, and destructive.

### **Ecotourism and the Limits of Nature**

Imaginariness of nature as an external, non-social environment with intrinsic or universal qualities have been troubled for some time within tourism studies and allied disciplines and fields (e.g., Castree & Braun, 2001; Glacken, 1967; Grimwood, Caton, & Cooke, 2018). Yet, as Reis and Shelton (2011) observe, much of the tourism industry accepts nature simply, and rather uncritically, as one environment in which tourism occurs. This seems especially the case in the production and consumption of ecotourism, where representations and perceptions of low-impact visitation to undisturbed natural areas continue to circulate and structure a nature conservation-oriented ethic. Adhering to “taken-for-granted” or “common sense” understandings of nature gives rise to several difficult assumptions that amplify a nature/culture divide: nature is an inherent, biophysical aspect of the world; natural environments are the sole inspiration for care and personal and social transformation (i.e., underlying social-cultural influences are ignored); nature requires improved technological management; and touring nature destinations is distinct from everyday contexts (Donohoe, 2011; Grimwood et al., 2018; Holden, 2003; Vespestad & Lindberg, 2010).

Cater (2006) suggested that the nature/culture divide lies close to the heart of ecotourism, and that this privileges a dominant, Eurocentric environmental imagination. In addition to constructing certain places as destinations to desire and consume, the dangers of this ethnocentric worldview include its ability to be superimposed upon the lives, knowledge, and values of people

inhabiting those locations (Cater, 2006). In other words, caring for nature can eclipse the care extended to our human kin. Many Indigenous communities have taken the brunt of this burden through colonial and neocolonial touristic encounters within ancestral lands. On one hand, imaginations of an ahistorical and ecologically “noble savage” have translated into mistaken assumptions that ecotourism, environmentalism, and Indigeneity have common ecological visions (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2009). On the other hand, patterns of traditional subsistence and self-reliant resource use can be undermined by the non-consumptive ideals of many ecotourists. In both cases, the “nature of ecotourism” is a source of potential conflict (Hinch, 1998; Grimwood, 2015). If, as Donohoe (2011) suggested, a single privileged conception of nature remains unchallenged, potential exists for community level tourism benefits to be replaced with insecurity, resentment, degradation, and economic loss.

Nature, as objectified and held in contrast with culture, is also commodified, and the ecotourism industry benefits from the nature/culture binary in the sale of experiences with “pure” wilderness, often offering the moral argument to consumers that taking part in such tourism is key to protecting these landscapes. As such, ecotourism exemplifies neoliberalism *par excellence*, as public goods are shifted to the private commodity system for stewardship (Fletcher & Neves, 2012). With the destruction of ecosystems, however, the pristine product is slipping away. But capitalism is undeterred. Enter “last chance tourism” (Lemelin et al., 2010) wherein the industry capitalizes not only on nature, but specifically on its destruction, as the Anthropocene “progresses” to pass it by. Fletcher (2019) keenly identifies last chance tourism as a form of what Klein (2007) calls “disaster capitalism,” wherein capitalism manages to capture crises it itself has created and then turn them into new opportunities for accumulation. In Klein’s (2007, p. 6) words, disaster capitalism involves “orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the

wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting marketing opportunities.” In the case of ecotourism, this process allows capital to continue to wring profit from raw materials that are fast disappearing by instead selling their very disappearance as the product. The body is also not exempt from capitalism’s disciplining power, as ecotourists purchase expensive gear, both materially and symbolically useful, to adequately equip themselves for their endeavor. Once properly attired, if they find themselves on a package tour, they are then choreographed—“told where and when to sit, stand, look, walk, move, stay still, and so on. They are also told which senses to use, how, and when. They are often told what to feel and when” (Fletcher & Neves, 2012, p. 67).

What to do in such a dispiriting predicament? Are there other values that can be brought to ecotourism that can bring support for human and other animal communities who receive “nature” guests? Are there possibilities for resistance that might strike out rhizomatically, surprisingly, even within a practice that is so much a product of contemporary colonial and capitalist exploitation?

### **Ecotourism and Care Ethics**

Care ethics is an unusual position in Western moral philosophy. Rather than taking abstract principles as its point of departure, it is instead rooted in understanding the lived moral experiences of actual people, particularly those of women, as care ethics derives from feminist philosophy (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2012).

Care theorists have observed that the historical experiences of women, despite being as “important, relevant, and philosophically interesting” as those of men, have been intellectually ignored, with women’s interactions in the private sphere being imagined as somehow simply natural and instinctive, rooted in the biological realm

of reproduction. This is opposed to the experiences of men in the public sphere, which have been imagined as cultural, creative, and complex, and therefore worthy of philosophical exploration. Central to those supposedly complexity- and creativity-bereft experiences in the private sphere, however, is what is actually the quite intense and thorny work of care-giving and relationship cultivation. The wisdom gained from navigating that domain of work offers a window of critique onto moral philosophies that consider only the complexities of negotiating rights and responsibilities between strangers in the public sphere (Hales & Caton, 2017, p. 97, quoting Held, 2006, p. 23).

Care theorists problematize the notion of liberal individualism so central to many dominant moral theories (e.g., Kantianism, utilitarianism), arguing instead that we are born into a web of relations that precedes any ontological notion of individual personhood, and they emphasize the moral obligations of responsiveness to need that inhere in concrete relationships with proximal others (Held, 2006). As a relational moral ethic, care is conceptualized as a practice rather than a disposition, involving relations that are characterized by attentiveness to context, responsibility, and responsiveness (Egers et. al., 2019; Held, 2004). Traditionally framed within human care interactions (particularly in private settings), care ethics has more recently been applied across a variety of other contexts—including the public sphere—and has been extended to humans and nonhumans, things and places (Jamal, 2019; Kheel, 2008).

Previous literature on care and ecotourism has helpfully sought to demonstrate the value of this perspective for guiding better ecotourism practices, as well as to problematize particular interpretations of care in the ecotourism context. Dangi (2018) and Eger et. al. (2019), for example, examined how care ethics could be adopted to provide mutual benefit in host–tourist

interactions and nature tourism business stakeholder relationships. Their studies examined how co-constructed caring relationships between stakeholders (i.e., tourists, host communities, tourism businesses) can contribute to more equitable and beneficial outcomes for all parties. Similarly, in their study of care ethics and justice in the development and management of a Mayan tourism destination, Jamal and Camargo (2014) sought to attend to the ecocultural relationships, cultural heritage, and well-being of Mayan peoples and their territories. For Jamal and Camargo (2014), an ethic of care complements an ethic of justice, contributing to the development of just tourism products and destinations characterized by care towards representations of Mayan cultural heritage, places, and local peoples. Their study also engaged with politics of care, wherein care ethics challenged the institutional and historically embedded racism and cultural discrimination experienced by Mayan peoples (Jamal & Camargo, 2014).

For Walker and Moscardo (2016), care ethics involves fostering care of place. Their study examined a sustainable tourism destination on an island off the coast of Australia, and illustrated how care of place can contribute to transformative change in the attitudes and behaviours of tourists towards local Indigenous peoples and the terrestrial and marine ecosystem on which they rely. Care ethics on an ecosystem level is a topic also explored by Waitt and Cook (2007), in their study of a kayak ecotour destination. In contrast with the previous authors, who focused on the benefits of care ethics in ecotourism, Waitt and Cook (2007, p. 542) problematize the way the ecotourism industry promotes a duty of care by the ecotourist that is translated into 'no touch' policies, which frame human presence and disturbance as "unnatural in ecotour spaces." Care ethics is also commonly employed in studies concerning animals in ecotourism, with varied implications for the tourism industry and policymakers. Yudina and Grimwood (2016), for example, explored how care ethics could inform the reconceptualization of sustainable tourism

by examining representations of polar bear tourism in Churchill, Manitoba. Their study challenges the anthropocentric and instrumentalist discourses that marginalize non-human animal others (i.e., spectacle bears), and proposes a conceptualization of sustainability that: prioritizes care, compassion, respect, and the inclusion of all tourism stakeholders (including animals); attends to the communications and desires of animal others in ethical decision-making; and embraces social justice and animal welfare concerns. Contextualized within the widespread bushfires of Australia in 2019 and 2020, Markwell (2020) examined how an ethics of care, specifically based on compassion, should inform industry responses to the destructive impacts of the fires on koalas and their habitat. For Markwell, care ethics would recognize that animals are not a tourism resource and that there is an obligation of care for animals, and ecosystems that support them, by the tourism industry. Taylor et. al (2019) and Fennell and Sheppard (2020) also offer recent examples of how care ethics can help us navigate our responsibilities to animals in tourism, in both cases considering the lives of elephants in touristic contexts. All of these authors also engage with a politics of care, with implications for animal rights, tourism regulation, and industry standards.

These examples illustrate how care ethics in tourism relationships and with nature—including animals (both human and otherwise), ecosystems, and places—can contribute to more equitable, beneficial, and just engagements with the peoples, critters, places, and things of tourism. Building on this growing body of literature on care and ecotourism, we are interested in a deeper layer of questioning: What feeds care? Can ecotourism play a role in providing it?

## **Enchantment**

Fletcher's identification of ecotourism as an expression of neoliberalism, a disciplining of the body, and even a type of disaster capitalism is prescient but bleak. In many ways, it is a Frankfurt School style argument, where commodification is a zero-sum game (Bennett, 2001). Commodity culture is so total, and so totally alienating to the humans operating within it, that there is no "possibility of an affective response to commodities able to challenge the socioeconomic system" that created them. There is no "aesthetic sphere" independent of capital, which could potentially platform resistance (Bennett, 2001, pp. 121–122). Fletcher and Neves (2012, p. 67) suggest this directly, arguing that "what ecotourism sells most centrally is a particular affective state—excitement, satisfaction, peace, contentment, pleasure, and so forth—attached to the outdoor, generally 'wilderness' experience it offers." Our very affect is coopted for capitalist gain. It's an utterly normative and existential-level grip.

In contrast, together with Bennett, and also with Deleuze and Guattari, we believe that there is still potential for resistance even within a commodity culture that can feel hopelessly total. Experience never creates perfect repetition. There is always room for a new sensibility, a new recognition, an "Aha!" moment, growth. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 216) put it, "There is always something that flows or flees, that escapes...the overcoding machine" (quoted in Bennett, 2001, pp. 115–116).

Capitalism unchained it may be, but to emphasize only this aspect of ecotourism is to overcode it. It can also be a force for care, for healing and reconciling humans with our generally poorly acknowledged more-than-human kin. More specifically, it can be a force for care because it is a source of that which feeds care: *enchantment*. As Bennett (2001) argues, ethics requires more than a moral code—it also requires an affective dimension that fills us up,



opens our generosity, and moves us to act in good ways. Experiences of enchantment, she contends, are important pathways to our better selves.

People have long seen the modern world as disenchanting. Weber was famous for this sentiment, lamenting in 1917 that “The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world’” (quoted in Landy & Saler, 2009). Long before, of course, Nietzsche had observed that God was dead, meaning that religion had lost its grip as an overall organizer of life meaning and guarantor of ontological security (i.e., what it is and means to be human). In the aftermath, many humans have been left to seek in alternative directions the many functions which, as Nietzsche observed, religion used to provide: mystery, wonder, order, and purpose; a significance of objects and events; the possibility of redemption; a sense of the infinite, the sacred, and miracles; and epiphanies, “moments of being in which, for a brief instant, the center appears to hold, and the promise is held out...of union with something larger than oneself (Landy & Saler, 2009, p. 2). Whether we have done that more or less successfully is a matter of debate. Both Bennett and Landy and Saler make a strong case that re-enchantment is not only possible but happening all around us in small ways. They even assert the danger of denying this pattern, suggesting that viewing the world as disenchanting is at best a misreading of modernity and at worst a form of micropolitics that militates against hope.

While we don’t doubt moments of enchantment in the contemporary human experience, we tend to be less optimistic. It’s hard to ignore the onto-epistemic unfolding of modernity. Berman (1984) and Kohák (1984) each offer a take on this process. Berman (1984, p. 351) emphasises the transition away from “participating consciousness,” or the idea that “everything in the universe is alive and interrelated, and that we know the world through direct identification

with it, or immersion in its phenomena (subject/object merger).” While this was a long transition, dating back even to early Jewish theology and some branches of Greek philosophy, it picked up steam in Europe with the eclipsing of alchemy (Berman’s last great example of participating consciousness) by the epistemology of the Scientific Revolution. Through this transition, the Western world entered a state of non-participating consciousness, still dominant today: “a state of mind in which the knower, or subject ‘in here,’ sees himself as radically disparate from the objects he confronts, which he sees as being ‘out there.’ In this view, the phenomena of the world remain the same whether or not we are present to observe them, and knowledge is acquired by recognizing a distance between ourselves and nature” (Berman, 1984, p. 355). It is easy to see how this shift in thinking feeds a nature/culture binary. Like Berman, Kohák (1984) emphasizes the importance of dichotomous thinking to modern onto-epistemics but concentrates more on the consequences for our ability to experience the world in a rich, direct, and embodied way. Separation of the knower from the object to be known sets us up to reduce the object to its parts, to abstract it into concepts that move increasingly further from our lived experience with it. In his explanation,

Western scientific thought—and popular thought in its wake—gradually substituted a theoretical nature-construct for the nature of lived experience in the role of “reality.” Far more than we ourselves usually realize, when we make seemingly obvious assertions about “nature,” we are no longer speaking about the natural environment of our lived experience, the living, purposive *physis* which humans can recognize as kin and in which they can feel at home. Our statements are far more likely to refer to a highly sophisticated construct, say, matter in motion, ordered by efficient causality, which is the counterpart of the method and purpose of the natural sciences rather

than an object of lived experience. Within such a construct, to be sure, there is no place for a moral subject, simply because that construct was not designed to deal with him (Kohák, 1984, p. 12).

We are the poorer for this situation.

And so unlike Bennett (2001) and Landy and Saler (2009), who focus on the ways enchantment is still alive and well among humanity, when we look at the world, we instead see a largely disenchanted place. We see a place where people struggle with connection, meaning, and purpose (Stroh, 2019; Boddy, 2017), and a sense of being at home in the world (Kohák, 1984; Haraway, 2016). We see a place where our disconnection from this home is so intense that we are destroying its ability to sustain life for many species, including ourselves, and where we are destroying beloved land-, sky-, and seascapes (Wernick, 2016, Bogard, 2013, Joyce, 2018) that give human life meaning. This is in no way to argue that moments of enchantment don't occur or that there is no hope for a widespread re-enchantment; indeed, it is the opposite—it is to argue that widespread re-enchantment *can* and *must* occur. But we're not there yet. We have to work for it.

Like seemingly all scholars who chose to work with the concept of enchantment, we are not advocating simply turning the clock back to pre-Renaissance ways of thinking about the world, and we are certainly not arguing for a wholesale rejection of scientific epistemology. Rather, we are curious about what participating consciousness might look like *here*, on the other side of modernity, in the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene. How might a re-enchantment of the world, 21<sup>st</sup>-century style, ignite our desire and give us the strength, courage, and inspiration to live relationally, in care-full and response-able (Haraway, 2016) ways, in our earth home?

All this talk of enchantment: but what do lived experiences of enchantment actually look like? Several key features of this experience have been offered. The most often highlighted are deep sensory engagement, quiet, and an alternative experience of time. As noted above, Kohák (1984) has argued that our ways of knowing have, since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, moved away from direct lived experience with nature and toward abstract understandings of it; conceptual ways of knowing have come to dominate visceral ones. This departure from the sensory in our understanding of nature is unhelpful in living a relational ethics. Sensory experiences cut through the abstraction. They allow us to be in the thick of things, in the mode Haraway (2016) calls *being-with*. They allow us to cultivate a kind of perception, a “meticulous attentiveness to the singular specificity of things” (Bennett, 2001, p. 37). In being with earth others in concrete and sensorily attentive ways, we put ourselves in a position to be struck with awe at their specificity—their irreplaceability.

Enchantment often emerges in quiet. As Kohák (1984, p. 31) expresses it, “The stars do not insist: even the glare of a white gas lantern or the reflected glow of neon will drown them out. Only where humans respect the night can they see the wonder of the starry heaven as the Psalmist saw it.” Contemporary life is full of noise. In his environmental memoir *The End of Night*, Paul Bogard (2013) tells us that two-thirds of Europeans and North Americans no longer experience real night. Writing from the United States, he notes that eight out of ten of his compatriots born today will never see the Milky Way. But moments of quiet are so important for giving us our bearings, helping us to locate ourselves as very small pieces of something potentially infinitely larger. Alain de Botton (2003) describes the quiet experience of being small in sublime places. His lesson, as Thomas (2020, p. 137) paraphrases it, “is that the universe is mightier than we are, that we are frail and temporary and must accept limitations on

our will, bow to necessities greater than ourselves.” Paradoxically, this enchantment with the sublime leaves us not discouraged but inspired by that which goes beyond ourselves (de Botton, 2003).

Enchantment opens a different sense of time. We are used to time either as highly personal or highly abstract. We live by the clock, an abstraction of the diurnal cycle that strains credibility, particularly for folks like us, living and working at fairly high latitudes, who routinely experience sunset at anywhere from 4 to 10 PM, depending on the month. And yet we live in time subjectively. Kellee’s last visit to see a friend in the Mediterranean went by in a heartbeat. She’s been writing this paragraph forever.

But there is a third sense of time, neither abstract nor subjective. As Kohák (1984, p. 16) explains:

It has all the hardness of the real, a logic of its own—the rhythm of vigor and fatigue, of day and night, the cycle of the seasons in the life of nature and humans alike. Its stages, though personal, are not in the least arbitrary. Primordially, human experience simply is not a sequence of discrete events which need to be ordered by a clock and a calendar or by free association within a stream of consciousness à la Proust or Joyce. It is, rather, set within the matrix of nature’s rhythm which establishes personal yet nonarbitrary reference points: when I have rested, when I grow weary, when the shadows lengthen, when life draws to a close. Though we may speak that way, it is simply not the case that at “six of the clock” certain events will occur—the shadows will lengthen, my axe will grow heavy in my hands. Stopping the clock does not stop the event. The primordial time reference is the opposite: it is the experience of the evening, lodged in the shadows about me and in

the weariness of my arms, which is the primordial given. Only secondarily do we designate it by a clock reference or acknowledge it in an internal time consciousness.

Leaning into one's place in this rhythm facilitates presence. And being present is fundamental for living well with earth others—as Donna Haraway (2016) calls it, for staying with the trouble. She calls us to take our place, “not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures,” but as fully present, with all those beings and earth processes with which we are already entangled but so easily forget to attend to (Haraway, 2016, p. 1).

And there is also a fourth sense of time, where, as Kohák (1984) describes it, eternity intersects with earthly time. Kohák describes exploring the cellar hole of an old farmhouse near the cabin where he has retreated to live in a forest clearing. A wall buckles under him to reveal a file that had long ago fallen through a crack in the wall. His thoughts turn immediately to the owner of the file, and he imagines how the owner must have been searching for it, must have been frustrated that he had just had it in his hands only a moment ago. Where had it gone? He found himself desperately hoping that the file's owner had not taken out his anger in losing the file on those around him, as we so often do to those closest to us. Some piece of us lives on in our artifacts, and in the way others can wonder about us. Then Kohák (1984, p. 122) imagines the man saying to his wife, “I will love you forever”—an “incredibly audacious statement,” Kohák acknowledges, “for a being who dwells in ever-flowing time. Yet he said it.” There is truth in eternal time, in legacy, and in the infinite expanse of a present moment. This is what Haraway (2016) means, when she talks of mourning as part of staying with the trouble. Lost species are remembered in the imprints they have left on others: for example, orchids that formed

their flowers to match the anatomy of bees, now long gone. Enchanted by the specificity and irreplaceability of what has been lost, we too can keep its memory alive.

## **Synthesis**

Moments of enchantment slip the overcoding machine. They turn us back to direct experience, to the expansive present, to a state of attentiveness wherein we can marvel at the specificity and integrity of all things and find our place among them. Moments of embodied sensory encounter break down abstract dualisms, bring mind back into body, bring body back into the earth as home.

The nature/culture binary that is so often reinforced through ecotourism suggests that humans are independent of others, even made of a different stuff, civilizational stuff, not the wild stuff of nature. Much like liberal theories of morality, the assumption is that we are free agents, negotiating our rights and responsibilities with others from the standpoint of individualism. But there is no self-made being, no such thing as autopoiesis, wherein beings organize themselves and progress through life on their own work and merit. There is only sympoiesis—making-with—where “critters interpenetrate one another, get indigestion, and partially digest and partially assimilate one another, and thereby establish sympoietic arrangements that are otherwise known as cells, organisms, and ecological assemblages” (Haraway, 2016, p. 58). We are all made of the same stuff. And our relations precede us.

Care ethics understands this fundamental relationality. But we need energy to exist in entanglement in caring ways, to practice care within the relationships that move us and invite us in. Living and dying together isn't easy. Care is an action, not only a sentiment, and we need resources to support us as we work to live care-fully. It is possible for ecotourism to be one such

resource; it must be, lest we accept commodifying and colonizing forces as totalizing and impervious. Perhaps, rather than learning about or conserving nature, the value of ecotourism lies in its capacity to arouse our sensory engagements within the world. Perhaps, rather than fostering the economic development needs of particular communities, the value of ecotourism lies in its capacity to bring us all—tourists, operators, destinations, as well our more-than-human kin—into sympoietic relationships that may invigorate more compassionate, vibrant worlds. Enchantment can provide the spark that moves our desire to be good to one another. Insofar as ecotourism can provide such moments of enchantment, there is still hope.

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