

'Moving beyond Tourism's Shallow End' (Religion, Spirituality and the Formation of Tourism Knowledge)

Abstract

Over the last decade tourism academia has been increasingly characterised as working in a knowledge domain that is sociologically framed. To date, however, there has been no explicit consideration in the literature as to whether and how an academic's spiritual and/ or religious beliefs should influence their engagement with knowledge formation. Drawing on Barkathunnisha et al's (2019) proposed notion of the 7th platform of tourism knowledge based on spirituality and the underlying four pillars – a spirit of knowing; a spirit of doing; a spirit of being; and a spirit of becoming; this exploratory paper will seek to propose some preliminary thoughts on some of the challenges and opportunities that a belief in spirituality and religion might have for tourism academia. Drawing on autobiographical insights from the author's own Christian faith, the paper concludes by discussing issues that the tourism academy will have to face in order to find ways to bring such a spiritual/ religious perspective into the formulation of tourism knowledge.

Keywords

Tourism knowledge; Religion; Spirituality; Values

Introduction

"Do whatever it takes to avoid fooling yourself into believing that something is true when it is false, or that something is false when it is true" (Ibn al-Haytham in Tyson, 2022)

"Science is vitally important, but it is only one figure on the hand of humanity, and its greatest potential can be actualised only so long as we careful to remember this" (His Holiness the Dalai Lama Lama, 2005, p. 11)

Over recent decades tourism knowledge has been increasingly framed as a sociological construct, one where a scholar's own 'knowledge force field' (person, position, rules, ideology and ends) mediates between the "theorised world of tourism (the canon of its knowledge) and its phenomenal world" (Tribe, 2006, p. 360). At the same time, the increasingly commercialised nature of tourism academia has led tourism scholars to critically reflect on how best to manage the interplay between their own moral position and the notions of abstract and objective scientific understanding that characterise the "dominant institutional and historical structures we are embedded in" (Hales, Dredge, Higgins-Desbiolles, & Jamal, 2018). The purpose of the present paper is to propose some preliminary thoughts on some of the challenges and opportunities that a belief in spirituality and religion might have for tourism academia. As a tourism scholar with an interest in social and environmental sustainability issues who is also a Christian; my own moral position stems from my belief in God and the idea that through a relationship with God through the death of his son Jesus Christ. Because of this I have a responsibility to use my research and teaching to equip future generations to safeguard the beauty of his creation now and into the future. As Hay (2009) has argued, we cannot assume a right to "discount the well-being of future generations of human beings, each of which will be loved by God as we are" (p. 64).

Recent scholarship has considered how tourism academics can potentially implement a spiritual and religious dimension into their knowledge building and educational activities (see Bakar, 2020; Barkathunnisha, Diane, Price, & Wilson, 2019; Barkathunnisha, Lee, & Price, 2017). One mechanism through which a spiritual dimension can be legitimised in the study of tourism was through the work of Barkathunnisha et al. (2019) who proposed an extension of earlier tourism knowledge models. The so-called 7th knowledge platform argued that there should be a “focus on the spiritual development and consciousness that emphasises the inter-relatedness and mutual dependency among human beings and the world around them” (Barkathunnisha et al., 2019, p. 2148). When Barkathunnisha et al. (2019) proposed the notion of the 7th platform of tourism knowledge based on spirituality they argued that it was underpinned by four pillars – a spirit of knowing; a spirit of doing; a spirit of being; and a spirit of becoming. Each pillar has the potential to influence the recipients of tourism knowledge (see Barkathunnisha et al. 2019). However, while there is an increasing level of understanding of research into the religiosity of tourism management (Collins-Kreiner, 2020; Kim, Kim, & King, 2020), what has not been considered to-date is the impact of the pillars on the belief of the scholar who advocates them and the link to a particular organised religious faith.

Methodology

Globally it has been estimated that there are over 4300 religions dominated by Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism (Travel Almanac, 2022). The diversity of religions and by implication the potential diversity of religious perspectives in the tourism academy makes it inappropriate to generalise on how and to what degree a form of spirituality or religion might influence our engagement with tourism’s scientific and other paradigms. For this reason throughout the paper the author will draw on autoethnographic principles and provide thoughts as to how his own Christian belief has influenced his engagement with tourism knowledge issues. Autoethnography has been described as an “approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Tourism writers have previously drawn on their own experiences as journal editors, scholars, travellers etc. (Botterill, 2003; Cohen, 2019b; Tribe, 2018) to offer insights on the management of tourism and the development of tourism knowledge using autoethnographic methods. In each instance the researcher is seen to be both part of the community being studied (Farsari, 2022) as well as writing in a manner whereby they can draw on their own experience to “break and remake canons of history through localised subaltern knowledge” (Spry, 2011, p. 497). This paper will employ an analytic approach to Autoethnography where the focus is on creating synergies between Autoethnography and more traditional ethnographic practices (Anderson, 2006). Cohen (2019) has used the approach to study his own experience of tourist-oriented crimes, noting that there was value in linking his own emotive experiences from a series of personal attacks whilst travelling back to the theory. In a similar fashion this paper is predicated on the idea that while tourism scholars have personal histories and that there is an increasing realisation of the interplay knowledge journeys and a perceived role in society (Ateljevic, Harris, Wilson, & Collins, 2005; Hales et al., 2018; Pocock, 2015); to-date even amongst articles focussed on presenting biographical summaries of key tourism scholars there is a lack detail on any link between religious belief and academic work.

Pillar 1: A Spirit of Knowing

Tourism academics have access to a range of disciplinary (social science, business studies, humanities and arts, and science) and inter-disciplinary perspectives (problem centred knowledge, values based knowledge, web 2.0 knowledge and indigenous knowledge) (Tribe & Liburd, 2016) with which to conceptualise and influence the world of tourism. Growth in critical tourism scholarship with its concern

for the “intuitive aspirations for inclusivity, diversity, partnership, sacredness and quality of life, deep play, sustainability, universal human rights, the rights of nature and peace on Earth” (Ateljevic, 2011, p. 509) has elevated a role for spirituality in the study of tourism (Willson, McIntosh, & Zahra, 2013). Representing a concerted pushback against the principles of modernity, which characterised the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Rojek, 1995), critical tourism has challenged scholars to move away from traditional rationalist perspectives of reality and embrace a more nuanced and self-critical perspective (Jamal & Everett, 2004). Often such perspectives have also resisted a focus on any “authoritarian imposition of religious certainty ... rediscover[ing] the sacred as a dimension of life and of our societies” (Ateljevic, 2011, p. 504).

Thomas and Ormerod (2017, p. 380 in Font et al., 2022) “suggest that, as a complex social phenomenon, tourism is best understood by combining the knowledge(s) produced by academics with that produced by other actors, so that it might have greater traction with practitioners”. Spirituality refers to the “human search for meaning, purpose, and connection with self, others, the universe, and ultimate reality” and religion as a “systematic body of beliefs and practices related to a spiritual search” (Sheridan et al., 1994, p. 365 in Abu Bakar, Price, Lee, & Wilson, 2021, p. 7). To-date there is limited evidence regarding what such concepts mean for the study of tourism (exception Bakar, 2020). Drawing on a small sample of twenty-two academics representing a mixture of Christian, Buddhist, and Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Tao and atheist beliefs, Bakar (2020) observed that tourism scholars with an interest in spirituality and religion often had challenges integrating such concepts into materialistic driven Business School environments. A common refrain was whether they be accepted by their academic colleagues or would students view anything on the study of religion as being “too weird, too hippy, too new age” (Bakar, 2020)? The motivation of the participants to focus on religion came from a desire to focus on what is the meaning in wicked problems like sustainability; if one was forced to “teach sustainability without a sense of spirituality as it would be almost inhumane, robotic and shallow, and it wouldn't have the full-bodiedness of sustainability. So, spirituality helps give a form of understanding to what sustainability means” (Agnes in Bakar, 2020). Even the atheist participant in the Bakar (2020) study, whilst not believing in religion, acknowledged the value in encouraging students to interrogate the meaning behind different values based perspectives.

The inclusion of values based perspectives has implications for the application of the scientific method. The scientific method is at its most fundamental level the practice of asking “a question and suggested explanation (hypothesis) based on an observation, followed by the careful design and execution of controlled experiments and finally validation, refinement and rejection of the hypothesis” (Carrol & Goodstein, 2009, p. 237). Often implemented haphazardly in tourism academia (Urano, Mathe, Coutinho, & Marques Junior, 2022) the strength of such scientific processes is its ability to allow knowledge to transcend “all kinds of frontiers: race, ideology, religion, political conviction and the myriad of other things that divide people from one another” (Lennox, 2009, p. 31). Tribe (2018) has argued with respect to tourism that early in one’s academic career we learn the need to test theories in the world “and those that are supported by empirical evidence and survive attempts at falsification are accepted into the canon of a subject” (p. 15). Tribe (2018) then builds on this, suggesting that what will ultimately underpin the legitimacy of research is the process whereby it is created and how it is accepted or curated by others. Tribe (2018) frames such processes according to organised frameworks and benchmarks including: significance; rigour; theoretical basis; originality etc. It is against such frames that perceptions of ‘truth’ will be determined. However, what of the notion in “each of the great Monotheistic traditions [that] sees God as truth, love and knowledge” (Miller, 2007, p. 267). In this paper I wish to extend Miller’s (2007) argument around evolutionary biology, “if faith and reason are both gifts from God, then ... [should they] play complementary, not conflicting, roles in our struggle to understand the world around us [in the world of tourism]?” (p. 267). For the present author understanding the relationship between science and

religion comes down to appreciating that they are focussed on asking different questions of the world. Science, with its focus on questions relating to what something is and how it occurs. In contrast, spirituality and religion is concerned with questions relating to why something happens. It involves asking questions about value and meaning, phenomena that are beyond the scope of traditional scientific understanding (Harari, 2016), which can include consideration of religion. Einstein made the following observation on the relative limits of religion and science:

Accordingly a religious person is devout in the sense that he has no doubt of the significance and loftiness of those super-personal objects which neither require nor are capable of rationale foundation. They exist with the same matter-of-factness as he himself. In this sense religion is the age-old endeavour of mankind to become clearly and completely conscious of these values and goals, and constantly to strengthen and extend their effects. If one conceives of religion and science according to these definitions, then conflict between them appears impossible. For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be, and outside its domain value judgements of all kind remain necessary. Religion, on the other hand, deals only with evaluations of human thought and action; it cannot justifiably speak of facts and relationships between facts (Einstein, 1940, p. 605)

Einstein was arguing that rather than being in direct conflict, science and religion have the potential to be self-supporting when each perceives its own limitations. Religion, is reliant on the knowledge gained from science to conceptualise what it means to be part of God's creation. At the same time, however, science can only be fashioned by someone who has sufficient truth and understanding (Einstein, 1940). As far back as the 1540s John Calvin the French theologian who was an influential figure in the Protestant Reformation argued that the apparent orderliness observed by science was evident for a role for religion in its understanding. Also importantly he argued that the Bible should not be misread as a scientific textbook; it is not a statement of ecology, anthropology, physics, biology or chemistry; it is solely the word of God testifying to the birth and resurrection of Jesus Christ (McGrath, 2013a).

Because tourism is an interdisciplinary field of academic inquiry it has access to a range of scientific framings and methodologies. Scholars from disciplinary backgrounds will apply different perspectives to the study of a tourism phenomenon in order to shed light on specific issues at hand. Recent work at the interface of ideas of spirituality with tourism education noted that trans-modernism "posits a new approach to tourism education, one that is transformative and multi-dimensional, emphasising cognitive, affective, moral, social, cultural and spiritual developments in students" (Brown 1998 in Barkathunnisha et al., 2017, p. 179). For the reader of this paper, what is it that serves as your foundation for developing your own affective, cognitive, social, moral, cultural and spiritual thinking? The science collected in tourism, which I am interpreting here as the "entire enterprise of secular reason and knowledge (including history and philosophy), not just people with test tubes and white lab coats" (Pinker in John Templeton Foundation, ND, p. 4) has grown exponentially in recent decades (Schweinsberg, Sharpley, & Darcy, 2022). We know so much about what tourism is and how it works, but at the same time can struggle to reconcile sometimes mutually exclusive considerations from our academic brethren, the industry that serves as the canvas for our research and the community at large. Disagreements often manifest themselves most acutely in circumstances where 'wicked' or socially constructed problems impact on the industry. When this occurs what foundation should a scholar fall back on? Critics of the religious view would respond to debates such as this with arguments that whilst there is current debate over what constitutes the limits of scientific understanding, we cannot reasonably place our absolute faith in a theistic/ deistic entity that is by definition empirically unknowable – the so-called god of the gaps argument (Dawkins, 2006). It is ok, some would suggest, that we don't yet have an understanding of how to scientifically conceptualise wicked problems like tourism's sustainable management. Science is by its nature open to the idea that is comfortable with the idea that something can remain unknowable, which the celebrated physicist Richard Feynman articulated in these terms:

The scientist has a lot of experience with ignorance and doubt and uncertainty, and this experience is of very great importance ... When a scientist doesn't know the answer to a problem he is ignorant. When he has a hunch as to what the result is, he is uncertain. And when he is pretty darn sure of what the result is going to be, he is in some doubt. We have found it of paramount importance that in order to progress we must recognise the ignorance and leave room for doubt (Feynman, 1955, p. 14)

Being religious does not for the present author devalue the merits of the scientific approach around 'wicked' problems like sustainability. Quite the opposite, it is only through the reasoned analysis of information that we can hope to further understand God's creation. At the same time, however, scientific understanding as currently defined by the disciplines of tourism should always be open to other knowledge lenses. For myself, I am reminded that how we know what we know about aspects of the world around us – it is “influenced by the characteristics and positionality of the knower, who is enmeshed in a complex social web of roles, heritages, experiences, and self-understandings” (Belhassen & Caton, 2009, p. 338). Such cultural perspectives are evident in the historical evolution and interplay between religion and science (see Craig, 2022b; Fara, 2009; McGrath, 1999; Meyer, 2021 for historical summaries). From my own perspective rather than being in conflict, religion and science exist in a symbiotic relationship, asking complimentary questions around what, how and why that jointly inform our collective spirit of knowing. When I reflect on what this means for the study of tourism I am reminded of two things. Firstly, I am reminded of the fact that tourism is not an industry as much it is a sociological framing of society of what it means to responsibly experience the world around us. As an academic I must strive to make a positive difference in the world through our research. However, as Hales et al. (2018) argue, it is impossible to completely separate the impacts we aim to achieve through our research from the values we have as people. As a Christian my own values based perspectives are framed by my faith, which in turn grounds a sense of reality in my perception of what I observe in the world through my research; it guides how I perceive ontological and epistemological disputes, how I perceive a value for empathy with whom those I deal with; and forces me to critically consider my role as a researcher. In doing so I am conscious of the fact that scientists, including social scientists, are often associated more with secular impulses, using the knowledge they create to decipher “the mysteries of the natural order without resource to supernatural aid or guidance” (Ecklund & Long, 2011, p. 2).

A second issue that flows from the idea of religion and science as being complimentary is the issue of 'validity' of the knowledge they respectively impart. Dixon and Sharpio (2022) note that we “generally derive knowledge of the world from four sources: our senses, our powers of rationale thought, the testimony of others, and our memory” (p. 19). The role of science has been described as an attempt to “weave these individually feeble threads into a more resilient web of knowledge” (Dixon & Shapiro, 2022, p. 19). Tourism has adopted many of the ideas of traditional science disciplines, privileging “technical, rational and scientific [perspectives]” (Font et al., 2022) as a way of ensuring its own pedagogical legitimacy. This has led some to speculate whether the inclusion of a religious perspective limits rather than enhances our ability to engage with the complexities of tourism's place in the world. Such observations are bound in long standing debates over the merits of a secularisation of society (Berger, 1967) and more specifically the interplay of science and religion in the formation of knowledge (Dixon & Shapiro, 2022; Ecklund et al., 2019; Lennox, 2009). However, for the present author it misses the point. Religion will never win a battle with science if the aim is to narrowly ask, which viewpoint “gives you more predictive power and the ability to change an outcome” (John Templeton Foundation, ND). Religion is not competing with science on what can be proved to be falsifiable or not. Rather, it is a statement of faith and a launching pad to understanding the ecstasy that one might experience in the glory of nature that underpins much of our research. As C. S. Lewis wrote:

Nature never taught me that there exists a God of glory and of infinite majesty. I had to learn that in other ways. But nature gave the word glory a meaning for me. I still do not where else I could have found one (in Yancey, 2002, p. 30)

A Spirit of Doing

Over recent decades one of the dominant themes in the study of tourism has been whether a focus on neoliberalism is commensurate with the cultivation of moral and ethical values (Mura & Wijesinghe, 2022). Such deliberations have manifested themselves in debates over the merits of whole of industry approaches to development, e.g. tourism growth versus degrowth (Butcher, 2021a, 2021b; Everingham & Chassagne, 2020; Fletcher, Murray Mas, Blanco-Romero, & Blázquez-Salom, 2019) as well as discussions over the ethicality of specific traveller practices including: elephant treks (Cui & Xu, 2019), sex tourism (Jeong & Lee, 2022) and medical tourism (De la Hoz-Correa, Muñoz-Leiva, & Bakucz, 2018) etc. There are numerous religious and non-religious perspectives that an academic may bring to an ethical study of the natural world (see Jenkins, Tucker, & Grimm, 2017; Zagonari, 2021). Religious perspectives should, I would argue, have an important place in how we view ethics as a society, espousing core principles; “Buddhism focuses on maintaining equilibrium, Christianity on love of neighbours, Hinduism on equal dignity of humans and non-humans, Islam on trusteeship and parsimony, and Judaism on stewardship” (Zagonari, 2020). For some, such perspectives are not absolute ethical standards in their own right, but rather expressions of one’s own standards presented as though derived from an absolute authority (Blackburn, 2001 in Fennell, 2018). Others in contrast argue that a belief in God is an essential metanarrative for all moral values, without which “morality is wholly subjective and non-binding” (Craig, 2022a). As Griffiths (2015) has argued, metanarratives “frame all other narratives and can be framed and explained by none” (p. 15). As a Christian my own metanarrative is entwined with my ethical perspectives. At the heart of my metanarrative is a belief in God’s power to create the universe, produce humankind in his image, and his decision to manifest himself in his son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Such a belief represents an important lesson for my understanding of tourism neoliberalism and in particular its relationship to its social and environmental setting.

In Barkathunnisha et al. (2019) a spirit of doing is about the interplay between one’s values and praxis. When seen in relation to tourism education this means dovetailing a reflexive appreciation of ethics and moral values with the development of vocational skills. In relation to tourism research it is about the ability to critically reflect on one’s role in tourism academia and one’s relationship to other stakeholders in the world of tourism. Schweinsberg and Darcy (2022, p. 28) have suggested that the role of a tourism academic is through research, teaching and engagement to develop the next generation of tourism professionals whilst being prepared “to ask tough questions of industry practice and to advocate without fear or favour for the development of a more ‘sustainable’ and ‘responsible’ (i.e., ‘Responsustable’) tourism sector”. Our epistemic authority as academics exists based on the confidence placed in us by other stakeholders within the world of tourism; industry, government, media and the community at large (Schweinsberg, 2022). Because of this, tourism scholars have a moral obligation to “lead in a way that is inclusive, empowering, and democratic” (Schweinsberg, 2022), engaging “constantly and reflexively with the ethical questions that surround ... [our] own identity, power and responsibility as academics” (Khoo-Lattimore, 2018, p. 239). It is therefore only with a personal critical reflection on what constitutes a moral ‘good’ that an academic will be able to grapple with important questions facing the tourism industry.

Tourism is a form of human activity that begets a number of fundamental ethical debates. Whether it is questions over the merits or costs in pursuing tourism as a form of capitalist expansion (Fletcher et al., 2021); or questions over the commodification of humans and the natural world to serve as the playthings of hedonistic travellers (Cole, 2007; Ni’am, Koot, & Jongerden, 2021; Tickle & von Essen, 2020); tourism is

a microcosm of wider societal challenges. Whether something is bad or good, it depends on the perspective of the beholder (Hall, 2015). Such viewpoints can manifest themselves through personal spiritual or organised religious beliefs that have their basis in Western and Eastern philosophical traditions (see Armstrong, 2022). As human beings we have the tendency to “assign meaning and value” in a way that transcends science (Miller, 2007, p. 267). From a Christian perspective this means that I must wrestle with challenging ethical questions such as how love of power and the potential to subjugate local peoples and perpetuate the idea of the ‘insignificant other’ might be at odds with my own Christian ideal – You should love your neighbour as yourself (Mathew’s Gospel 22:39). In doing so, however, I must always remember that I am part of a system that prioritises competition, academic performance benchmarks, grant attainment etc., which can lead to a corruption of the work-life balance (Rosa, 2022) and a loss of personal integrity and academic freedom (Schweinsberg, Fennell, & Hassanli, 2021). I must also, however, be open to a critical examination of the ethical frameworks of my own metanarrative. Harari (2018) made the important point that any religion’s claim of moral absolutisms should be treated with caution, lest we may mistakenly assume that every contemporary morality debate can have its solution found in only one source of knowledge. Complementarity thus forms an important part of instilling a religious perspective into my spirit of doing; the ability to consider other points of view simultaneously and what they reveal in relation to a specific issue or situation (Wilczek, 2022).

A Spirit of Being

The ability to reconcile contradictions in one’s academic praxis, to engage in complimentary thinking, is dependent on the ability to critically reflect on one’s own sense of self. Over the course of our time as academics we are influenced by a range of institutional and personal forces including academic mentors, colleagues and industry collaborators who in different ways help us to identify our place (Doorne et al., 2007; Schweinsberg, Heizmann, Darcy, Wearing, & Djolic, 2018). For some in the academy such influencers extend to incorporate religion, which is sometimes seen as a pathway towards interconnectedness, transcendence and a personal quest for meaning (Bakar, 2020). While religion is only a marginal influence in many parts of the academy owing to concerns over stigmatisation and allegations of unsophisticated thinking by colleagues given the pre-dominance of relativist thinking throughout much of the social sciences (Ecklund et al., 2019; Ecklund & Scheitle, 2007; Spencer & Waite, 2022); in many respects a religious scholar’s faith is not dissimilar to an atheist’s considered position that there is no God. There will always things that can be empirically proven and other things that must be taken on faith, be it faith in one’s self, a deistic or theistic entity or something else. Barkathunnisha et al. (2019) talk of one’s spirit of being in relation to tourism includes the idea that “values and ethics cannot be taught for practical wisdom but must be experienced through an engagement with the inner consciousness” (p. 2151). In an educational context this involves educators guiding students “toward self-discovery and authenticity, develop their sense of the transcendence and shape their experience in ways that empower the individual spirit to take good actions” (p. 2151). When, however, seen from the perspective of an individual academic one must explore how their religious faith has evolved and juxtaposed with their growing experience in the study of tourism.

Like many before him the present author is a lapsed human geographer who got into the study of tourism initially as a pathway to transition from Arts to the study of Business. Over the last decade or so my research interests have built on these human geography roots, evolving into a focus on tourism sustainability. Areas of specific research interest has been in relation to tourism’s place based setting, with a specific focus on tourism development in tourism’s national park based settings. Reflecting back over the period of my academic life the one consistent of my research into sustainability was the understanding that the more I know of the world, the less I know. When I was a child my understanding

of nature came from documentaries, family holidays and reading. Children's literature including seminal works such as *The Lorax*, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, and *Wind in the Willows* have played a role throughout the western world in bonding generations of children to the natural world and instilling in them the power of non-human agency in environmental management (Lawrence, 2014). The mechanisms by-which such binding occurs includes a mixture of works e.g. Anna Sewall's *Black Beauty*, which explores non-human (often animal) perspectives on human environmental interaction with the aim of exploring the obvious limits of human kind's concern for the natural world in which they are co-inhabit (Buell, 2014). Perhaps not surprisingly my early understanding of sustainability, such as it was in primary school in the 1980s, was often limited to a focus on environmental preservation, with little appreciation of the wicked and contested problems that underpin sustainability debates to-day.

Such perspectives were also evidenced in my perspectives on Christianity and the Bible as a child. I knew that God created the heavens and the earth and that human kind has a responsibility to be stewards the natural world (e.g. Genesis 1:28-30 & Psalm 24:1). In addition to attending Sunday school and church youth groups I was influenced heavily as a child by writings including C. S. Lewis's *The Narnia Chronicle's* (see Hooper, 1996 for a discussion of plot points and key themes). Written by C. S. Lewis from 1950 to 1956 the chronicles have become canons of 20th century English literature – often being compared to other masterpieces by Lewis's great friend and colleague J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (see Zaleski & Zaleski, 2015). Being also overtly Christian in their subject matter (Bruner & Ware, 2005) the chronicles also represent a useful point of comparison to understand the relationship between one's religious perspectives and contemporary tourism sustainability considerations. The *Narnia Chronicles* have since their initial publication be questioned by readers for the underlying message(s) they convey – the presence of its potential medieval symbolism (Ward, 2008); the presence of a deliberate Christian allegory in Lewis's writing (Babu & Vishnuvardhan, 2022) etc. When I read the Chronicles as a child I was I was enthralled with the imagery of children entering secret parallel worlds, the grandeur of its environmental descriptions, the presence of talking beasts and battles between the lion Aslan and the White Witch. Over time, however, I began to appreciate the deeper religious symbolism and apologetic nature of the work and more recently as an adult the challenges that the books present over Lewis's treatment of issues that are central to social sustainability issues including gender and race. In recent years there has also been attempts made to argue for and against the presence of environmental and sustainability messages in the *Narnia Chronicles* (e.g. Dickerson & O'Hara, 2009; Echterling, 2016a; Echterling, 2016b; Morris, 2009; Noëlle O'Connor & Bolan, 2008). From a pro-sustainability perspective the books have been argued to have made important arguments in favor of the positive ethical engagement with animals. McGrath (2013b) has observed that when Lewis wrote the *Narnia Chronicles* in the mid-twentieth century he was writing in an age where vivisection was still seen as accepted practice in society. Morris (2009) has observed that Lewis's writings in children's literature thus sought to emphasise the importance of animal autonomy and offering criticisms of human/ animal experimentation, themes that have been important foundations of arguments around sustainable consumption (Suphasomboon & Vassanadumrongdee, 2022) and the rights of animals in tourism contexts across current and future generations (Fennell, 2018, 2022).

The use of a children's novel to examine the interplay between faith and sustainability realities has parallels to the role of science fiction writing and tourism; specifically the manner in which fictitious scenarios can be used to test the boundaries of imagination and reality for the reader (Yeoman & McMahan-Beattie, 2021). From a literary perspective Pocock argued that "literary landscapes would be described as landscapes of imaginative reflection" (1981 in Noelle O'Connor & Kim, 2014, p. 3). One of the best examples of an expert crafter of imaginative reflection was the environmental scientist Rachel Carson, author of the work *Silent Spring*. Carson was a Christian although interestingly not an evangelical Christian with respect to her scientific work. For Carson, nature was to be seen "through a scientific lens

of cause and effect” (Wadsworth, 2016, p. 111). At the same time, however, the imagery e.g.: “life is a miracle beyond our comprehension, and we should reverence it even where we have to struggle against it” (Wadsworth, 2016, p. 115) contain overt Christian overtones.

As I have grown in my faith, however, my childish ignorance has been tested. Through my reading on the relationship between tourism and sustainability and experiences in the field I have been asked to reflect on many complex issues including: tourism’s marginalisation of the ‘other’; the injustices inflicted by tourism on host communities, wildlife, local workers and at-risk members of the community; and the inherent ambiguity in what constitutes responsible tourism practice etc. Issues such as these can cause a number of operational opportunities and challenges for global tourism, which is forced to respond in a way that is reflective both of societal values and international/ local laws. As a Christian I also have a responsibility to reflect on the words of the bible and to pray. In doing so I must remember that “what is perfectly lawful, and perfectly permissible, for everyone else – even our very close non-Christian friends – is not necessarily lawful and permissible for us” (Scalia, 2017, p. 31). What this demonstrates is that no tourism scholar can deny their own values, nor the links between one’s faith and evolving trends in the philosophy of tourism including the development of post humanist perspectives (Cohen, 2019a).

A Spirit of Becoming

Tourism academia is a product of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, developing initially to support hospitality and catering degrees in North America and Europe, before being formalised and the first tourism journals being developed in the 1930s and 40s (Schweinsberg et al., 2022). Because of this the history of tourism academia was developing at the same time as the rise of secularism (Zinnbauer et al., 2015) and the first instances of open warfare between religion and science. This trend is evidenced in the work of Andre Dickson’s *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology under Christendom* in 1896 (Craig, 2022b). Draper argued that “the history of science is not a mere record of isolated discoveries; it is a narrative of two conflicting powers, the expansive force of the human intellect on the one side, and the compression arising from traditionary(sic) faith and human interests on the other” (1874 in McGrath, 1999, p. 45). Subsequent to this there has been a progressive shift towards scientific materialism, methodological naturalism and a reduction in the effect of the religious perspective (Meyer, 2021). In the early twenty-first century higher levels of societal interest in scientism is often linked to the new atheist movement, which was popularised by the writings of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and others (Zenk, 2013).

In 1965 the Catholic Church issued “a ‘General directory for the pastoral ministry to tourism’, which recognised the importance of tourism and of its pastoral challenges in the contemporary world” (Cohen, 2018, p. 371). To-date, however, no formal theological tradition has seen fit to develop a ‘theology of tourism’ and until the last decade or so academics were often hesitant in “developing their understanding of the philosophical ... processes that underpins knowledge production and practice” (p. 361). Working with partner disciplines in organisational and management theory, which have historically viewed religion as a taboo subject (Van Buren III, Syed, & Mir, 2020); tourism academics have a responsibility to consider how religion can be incorporated into the corpus of the tourism knowledge domain. Barkathunnisha et al. (2019) note that the incorporation of spiritual dimensions in the teaching of tourism involves looking beyond traditional positivist Western paradigms, adopting an ontological perspective which “emphasises the connection between nature, culture and society. The learner transcends, moving beyond one’s own self into the consciousness of a larger universe” (p. 2142). In the space remaining this paper will consider two issues that the tourism academy will have to face in order to find ways to bring such a spiritual/religious perspective into the formulation of tourism knowledge.

Firstly, we must remember that the tourism academy is a broad church, one that is subject to a myriad of intellectual interests with members drawn from all over the world and thus encompassing a wide variety of secular and religious perspectives. Future work should start by seeking to understand empirically what religious affiliations exist within the tourism academy. At the same time, however, we must learn from the earlier experiences from the disciplines including physics and biology in relating with religion – nobody wins through conflicts between religion and science. Whether it was the ill-conceived attempt of the Catholic Church to bring Galileo before the inquisition in 1633 (see description of Galileo and the inquisition in Hummel, 1986) or more recently Richard Dawkins criticising not only the ethics of the Hebrew old testament God, but comparing the act of educating children to believe in Jesus as tantamount to abuse (Dawkins, 2006); pursuing divisions between religion and science means that each side misses out on the opportunity for a larger perspective than otherwise would have been available to them through their own narrow parochial viewpoints. One of the central aspects of Tribe and Liburd's (2016) tourism knowledge system was the idea that the relationship between different paradigms and non-paradigmatic ways of knowing are fluid (networked), subject to the possibility of forming, dissolving and reforming over time. A question that I would therefore ask the reader to consider is this. Do you ascribe to the view of Keat (1981 in Ayikoru, 2009, pp. 68-69) that everything that is "presumed to be non-scientific, such as the discourses of religion, metaphysics, ideology, politics and ethics or tourism for that matter ... [should be] bracketed as inferior, cognitively meaningless or even nonsensical"? Or do you in fact ascribe to Keat's other point that you can "uphold a positivist idea of what counts as scientific knowledge, without having to believe that science entails the only form of genuine knowledge" (1981 in Ayikoru, 2009, p. 69)? For the present author who is a Christian, Kenneth Miller (Professor of Biology at Brown University) summed it up well when he said that for a scientist to be threatened by God assumes that the almighty is "nothing more than a place holder for human ignorance" (John Templeton Foundation, ND, p. 39).

Secondly, I would ask the reader to critically consider the nature of the tourism academy of which we are all a part. Scientists have for over a century often been said to be less religious on average than the general population (Ecklund et al., 2019; Ecklund & Long, 2011; Ecklund & Scheitle, 2007). Secularisation theory drawing on perspectives from Weber, Marx and others in the mid twentieth century espoused the notion that there was an association between the modernisation of the economy and society, which tourism has been an essential manifestation of, and the decline of religious relevance (Gross & Simmons, 2009). This paper will not be naive and suggest that religious people are currently in the majority with respect to the composition of the tourism academy. At the same time, however, the recent growth in post-secular tourism has drawn attention to the need to consider the link between the subjectivities of tourism scholars and their work to understand the world of tourism (Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2018).

Conclusion

The title of this paper is a reference to a recent study by the Theos think-tank that explored UK societal and academic perspectives on the relationship between 'science' and 'religion' where it was acknowledged that both are "highly complex, contestable [and] 'polyvalent' terms" that are often debated to narrowly (Spencer & Waite, 2022, p. 3). The debates between 'science' and 'religion' are "like the proverbial swimming pool where all the noise is up at the shallow end" (p. 26), which has often tended to discount the value that both perspectives bring to our understanding of the world. All epistemologies, or ways of knowing, as implemented in a pedagogy, or a way of teaching and learning, tends to become an ethic, or a way of living" (Palmer and Zajonc, 2010, p. 98 in Barkathunnisha et al., 2019, p. 2151). For the present author this means that it is not possible to distinguish the study of tourism from my Christian faith. For myself, believing in God does not devalue the merits of the scientific approach to the study of tourism, nor does it offer an opportunity to skirt scientific responsibility, the God of the gaps argument.

Rather, God “is the ground for all explanation: it is his existence which gives rise to the very possibility of explanation, scientific or otherwise” (Lennox, 2009, p. 48). The purpose of the paper has been to challenge the reader to consider, on what basis is your own explanation of tourism knowledge based?

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Tourism Recreation Research

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