Chapter 12
Towards a Phenomenology of Dark Tourist Experiences

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Abstract. Dark Tourism represents the intersection of reflections on mortality with the commodification and consumption of death as a tourist experience. It is a complex and contested concept that has been approached from a variety of theoretical standpoints. In this paper, I suggest that a phenomenological analysis of the experiences of those who engage in dark tourism can provide a means of approaching the subject that can both accommodate the diversity of experiences sought by the dark tourist, and deepen our understanding of the nature and purpose of dark tourism. More specifically, I repurpose Cohen's (Sociology 13(2):179–201, 1979) typology of tourist experience to suggest a phenomenological typology of dark tourist experiences. Following Cohen, I suggest that we can chart the dark tourist experience as a continuum ranging from a pleasure-seeking experience to a meaning-seeking experience, qualified by authenticity-seeking or alienation-avoiding motivations, and the individual tourist's proximity to or distance from the "centre" of their worldview. Such an analysis allows us to differentiate between tourists whose motivations are more recreational in nature and those whose motivations are more existential. A phenomenological analysis also enables us to further differentiate amongst the different modes of existential experience sought by the "pure" dark tourist and to consider the conditions of possibility necessary for their realisation.

Keywords: Dark tourism · Phenomenology · Erik Cohen · Transcendence · Alfred Schutz

The term "dark tourism" was coined by Foley and John Lennon (1996) and has come to designate the way in which sites and experiences of death, suffering, and the grotesque have come to be increasingly commercialized and presented as tourist offerings. Academic treatment of this phenomenon has ranged from the analysis of specific dark sites and the investigation of tourist motivations to visit such sites to the categorization of the different types of dark tourism suppliers.

This paper aims to facilitate the analysis of dark tourist experiences, and the role of the dark tourist site or object in structuring and facilitating those experiences by using a phenomenological approach. Erik Cohen (1979) put forward a phenomenological framework for analyzing tourist experiences. Though much discussed, Cohen's

framework has remained curiously underutilized in tourism analysis. I suggest that Cohen's phenomenological framework, with only a modicum of adjustment, provides a particularly fecund means of analysing dark tourist experiences. To this end, I shall provide an overview of Cohen's original phenomenological framework of tourist experiences and the framework's various modes. I shall then explain how these modes can be used to analyse dark tourist experiences. I will explore the ways in which the dark tourist sites/objects signify within the experience of the dark tourist and will suggest that this signification can be used as a means to demarcate dark tourist experiences from other touristic experiences. Finally, I will analyse the role that transcendence plays within the dark tourist experience and argue that employing a span of transcendence, from little to great, in the analysis of the dark tourism experience can provide a minor supplement to Cohen's framework that expands its depth of analysis.

12.1   Dark Tourism: An Overview

Dark tourism refers to the types of tourism that are connected with the morbid or the macabre, from memorials to the departed to battlefields and sites of death and suffering. The term was coined by Foley and John Lennon (1996), and subsequently expanded upon in their *Dark tourism: In the footsteps of death and disaster* (2000). In Foley and Lennon's original formulation the term was intended to draw attention to, and demarcate, certain forms of tourism that deviated from the presumed norm for tourism activities of recreation and relaxation. The focus here was upon the identification of sites and products that were "dark." Foley and Lennon viewed the tourist interest in death and dying as a symptom of the postmodern condition. Seaton, in contrast, viewed the touristic fascination with death as a long-running feature of Western culture rather than a recent development. Seaton put forward the term "thanatourism" as an alternative to "dark tourism," and shifted the focus of research from the identification and description of dark tourist sites to the description of tourists whose activities were "wholly, or partly motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death" (Seaton 1996, 240). The emphasis here lay with the experiences and the motivations of the dark tourists rather than the features of dark sites.

Subsequent research on the supply-side of dark tourism has questioned the possibility of demarcating between "dark" and "light" in a binary manner and have instead reconsidered dark tourist sites as lying along a spectrum from light to dark (Miles 2002; Sharpley 2005; Stone 2006). And research on tourist demand for dark tourist attractions have likewise moved on from the attempt to categorise a specific tourist type, *the* dark tourist, and now acknowledges that a multiplicity of motivations that can lie behind dark tourist activity (Stone and Sharpley 2008; Hyde and Harman 2011). One consequence of the ongoing refinement and complication of the concept of dark tourism is that it has led to a certain conceptual fuzziness. As Ashworth and Isaac note, "a quality of darkness could be attributed actually or potentially, to some extent, almost everywhere" (2015, 2). As a result, dark tourism is in danger of becoming relatively indistinguishable from other forms of tourism. In the sections below I shall use a modification of Cohen's phenomenology of tourist experiences as a framework for the analysis of

dark tourist experiences. Such a modification, I argue, can accommodate dark tourist experiences within the spectrum of typical tourist experiences, whilst at the same time allowing us to demarcate the object of dark tourists' activities from other types of tourist activity.

12.2 Cohen's Tourist Phenomenology

In his (1979) "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences," Cohen argues that, given the diversity of experiences sought by contemporary tourists, the tourist as a specific type does not exist. Drawing on the work of Edward Shils (1975), he suggests instead that the different modes of touristic experience can be understood as occupying positions defined in terms of their relation to a "centre." This centre is not to be understood in spatial terms as demarcating a geographical region, but in spiritual terms, as the centre of a system of values and beliefs. Cohen puts forward five different modes of tourist experience: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential. Each mode is not intended to be self-contained, but rather mark positions along a spectrum of the tourist experience. The spectrum represents the tourist's relationship with the social and cultural system in which they are situated. At the near end, we have the modes of experience common to those for whom the centre of their social existence and centre of their spiritual existence overlap to a significant degree. And at the far end of the spectrum, we find the modes common to those with the greatest degree of separation between the centre of their social existence and their spiritual centre.

Cohen's framework represents a synthetic response to the conflicting positions then dominant in tourist theory on the authenticity or inauthenticity of the motivations for tourist activity. On the one hand, the modern tourist, as represented by Boorstin (1964) and Turner and Ash (1975), is characterized as a superficial pleasure-seeker in pursuit of pseudo-experiences. And on the other, represented by Dean MacCannell (1999), the tourist is depicted as an alienated pilgrim in search of existential authenticity.[1] Cohen's experiential framework accommodates both characterizations, with Boorstin's pleasure-seekers lying closest to the end of the experiential spectrum marking those individuals whose spiritual centre lies closest to the centre of their social existence, and MacCannell's authenticity-seekers lying at the farther end of the spectrum amongst those for whom the spiritual centre of their existence lies at a considerable remove from the centre of their society.

Cohen's main modes of tourism experience are recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential. The recreational tourist seeks entertainment and refreshment, rather than deeper meaning. The diversionary tourist, on the other hand, is alienated from their own social or cultural centre and engages in tourism for therapeutic purposes. As with the recreational tourist, an alternative centre of meaning is neither acknowledged nor sought. With the remaining three modes, one finds the opposite state

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[1] It should be noted that the use of the concept of "authenticity" in tourism studies is itself extremely fluid and rather problematic. Cf. Swer 2019.

of affairs. The experiential tourist is aware of their own alienation from the centre and seeks spiritual meaning by experiencing other, more "authentic," cultures.[2] They remain, however, authenticity "voyeurs" in that they observe alternative modes of existence (where presumably the spiritual and social centres align) but do not attempt to join with them in any sustained or spiritually significant manner. The experimental tourist goes a step further and engages with the alternative way of life, but without a firm commitment to its centre. In the experimental mode, one samples from the world's spiritual "buffet," hoping to find the one option that speaks to us on a spiritual/existential level. The final mode, that of the existential tourist, is for the one who has made an existential commitment to an ex-centric spiritual centre.

Central to Cohen's experiential framework is the fundamental human need for a spiritual centre, a place "which for the individual symbolizes ultimate meanings" (Cohen 1979, 181). Insofar as one's spiritual centre coincides with one's social centre, one does not feel a need to seek a spiritual centre elsewhere, and consequently one tends to engage in tourism for recreational or diversionary purposes. It is those who feel the lack of a spiritual centre, or those whose spiritual centre is ex-centric to their social centre, that engage in tourism for more existential reasons.

12.3   Cohen's Phenomenological Model Applied to Dark Tourist Experiences

I argue that Cohen's phenomenological framework of tourist experiences can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the phenomenological analysis of dark tourist experiences. The merit of Cohen's approach is that if one interprets tourist experiences at a spiritual level, in terms of the proximity of one's spiritual centre to one's social and/or cultural centre, then this allows one to engage dark tourism not as an exception to typical forms of tourism but as an extension of normal phenomenological patterns of the tourist experience. Furthermore, plotting dark tourist experiences along Cohen's phenomenological framework allows for a more nuanced understanding of dark tourism in that it allows one to differentiate amongst the different modes of the dark tourist experience. The assimilation of dark tourism experiences to a broader phenomenology of tourist experiences allows dark tourism to appear as a less monolithic, and more heterogeneous, phenomenon.

Cohen's phenomenological framework shifts one's attention to the purposive "in-order-to" of the dark tourist, the intentional project that explains the act of visiting a tourist site (Schutz 1962, 69–72). And by so doing, it allows one to differentiate amongst tourists' intentional projects in relation to their travel to dark tourism sites by relating

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[2]Cohen associates this mode, and this mode only, of tourist experience with MacCannell's account of the authenticity-seeking tourist as a pilgrim (Cohen 1979, 188). I suggest that Cohen is imposing an overly restrictive interpretation on MacCannell's position and will argue that MacCannell's model of the modern tourist straddles all of Cohen's modes of the tourist experience.

their intentions to intersubjective structures of meaning. More specifically, it relates dark tourist intentions to the location of their spiritual centre. Thus, at one end of the dark tourism framework, we would find those whose intentional encounter with death or the macabre is to be understood in relation to a spiritual centre that coincides with their social centre. And at the other, those whose intentional encounter is to be understood in relation to an ex-centric spiritual centre, whether it be sought or actual.

Accordingly, a recreational mode of dark tourist experience would involve an encounter with death or the macabre that was undertaken for entertainment purposes. Such an experience would typically be a secular one, a change of scene for restorative purposes. With this mode, dark tourism is intended to produce enjoyment rather than spiritually significant experiences. It is, as Cohen puts it, based upon a "rational belief in the value of leisure activities" (Cohen 1979, 184) and does not seek an authentic encounter with death or human suffering. Indeed, an excessive level of realism would likely undermine the recreational dark tourist's enjoyment of the experience. One can imagine that dark tourists desiring this mode of experience might well seek out the sort of dark tourist sites that Stone refers to as "dark fun factories" (2006, 152).[3]

The diversionary mode of the dark tourist experience would be sought by those alienated from the centre of their society but who do not seek to connect to a new or former centre of meaning. The purpose of dark tourism for such individuals would be to render their alienation tolerable, to provide a temporary respite from the unsatisfying routine of their everyday lives. Visits to dark tourism sites then might well have as their purpose the desire for an encounter with something out of the ordinary, the singular, the horrific. Something which introduces a *frisson* of excitement, or a feeling of something other than the commonplace or indeed nothing.[4] The point again here is that nothing more is sought in this experience than at the simply sensational level.

With the experiential mode of dark tourism experience, the desire for experiential authenticity becomes a more central factor in the tourist's project. The experiential dark tourist is aware that their social centre cannot provide an adequate meaning for human death and suffering and, feeling the lack, searches for that meaning in the experiences of others. The experiential dark tourist, for whatever reason, feels a need for the experience of the deathly, and for that experience to have significance. The urge for the experience is thus connected with the need for a structure of meaning for this aspect of human existence. A dark tourist driven to seek such experiences is unlikely to be satisfied with the ersatz or overly sanitized dark tourist site, or with sites that are focused on

[3] In this section I shall make continuous reference to Philip R. Stone's (2006) typology of the suppliers of dark tourist products. Stone describes Dark Fun Factories as sites, tours, etc. that have an "entertainment focus and commercial ethic" and a "high degree of tourism infrastructure" (Stone 2006, 152). Though such sites may have a clear connection to the death and the macabre, the tone of the tourist attraction is kept light and playful. As instances of such attractions, one might include the London Dungeons or the Zombie Apocalypse Park in Dubai.

[4] The sites preferred by those seeking this mode of experience might well include what Stone (2006) calls Dark Exhibitions. These sites combine a "commemorative, educational and reflective message" with their death-related product. Examples of such sites include museums with a focus on the morbid, such as the Shrunken Heads Room at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and the Torture Museum in Amsterdam, and attractions like the Body Worlds exhibition.

commerce or entertainment, and will more likely seek the "real deal," that is to say, the actual sites of death events.[5] That said, it is central to the experiential mode that the encounter with the death and suffering of others remains at the observational level. The experiential tourist is not united with those observed in a shared centre of spiritual meaning. Their engagement remains at what Cohen terms an aesthetic level (Cohen 1979, 188). They may experience the death and suffering of others but, due to the vicarious nature of this experience, it does not involve a fundamental reordering of the tourist's structures of meaning. It is not yet a being-toward-death, the affirmation of one's own inescapable finitude that Heidegger viewed as necessary for existential authenticity, but it might be viewed as a stage on the way towards one (Heidegger 1962).

The experimental mode of the dark tourist experience is characteristic of those who seek to encounter and comprehend death and suffering on an authentic level. Rather than simply observing the death and suffering of others and the structures of meaning that can be applied to them via dark sites, the experimental dark tourist seeks to share those experiences of meaning in the face of finitude. Those who experience dark tourism in an experimental mode are engaged in a project of "trial and error" to establish an authentic relationship towards death (Cohen 1979, 189). They seek a meaning structure for the experience of finitude that "speaks" to them, one that is compatible with their existential needs, but they have not yet committed themselves to one spiritual centre.

In contrast, the existential mode of the dark tourist experience is characteristic of the dark tourist who has made just such an existential commitment to a spiritual centre. Whilst the experimental, and to an extent the experiential, dark tourist exhibits an awareness of human finitude and suffering, and the corresponding need to accommodate that awareness within an intersubjective structure of meaning, the existential tourist seeks dark sites in order to encounter the deathly within a specific meaning structure.[6] Their commitment to an ex-centric centre of meaning informs their understanding of death and suffering and sustains their encounters with these phenomena upon their return to the centre of their social existence. This account of the relationship between profane daily existence and the sacred as represented by and accessed through the dark tourism site has, as Cohen notes, marked similarities with the traditional conception of religious pilgrimage. The difference between the pilgrim and the tourist, on Cohen's account, is that with the pilgrim but not with the tourist, the centre sought is *given* rather than elected (Cohen 1979, 190). This does not entail, however, that the ex-centric spiritual centre selected by the existential dark tourist is necessarily novel. The existential mode of experience would also be characteristic of the individual who has been alienated from a traditional centre of meaning but, through visits to dark tourist sites, seeks

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[5] Such sites might include Stone's Dark Dungeons, "sites and attractions which present bygone penal and justice codes" and typically "occupy sites which were originally non-purposeful for dark tourism" (2006, 154). These sites combine entertainment with education, both rooted in the historical authenticity of the site itself. Examples include Robben Island and the Bodmin Jail Centre.

[6] Such sites might include, using Stone's terminology, Dark Conflict Sites such as Isandlwana and Passchendaele, and Dark Camps of Genocide, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau (Stone 2006, 156–157).

to reconnect with that centre. As Cohen puts it, "Such travellers, so to speak, re-elect their traditional centre" (Cohen 1979, 191).

It should be noted that, as with Cohen's original range of experiential modes, the modes of the dark tourist experience described above do not represent fixed types. "Any individual tourist may experience several modes on a single trip" (Cohen 1979, 192).[7] Given this possibility of multiple or overlapping modes of experience, Cohen also identifies two qualifications to his modal framework, those of humanists and dualists. Humanists, on Cohen's account, do not have one specific spiritual centre. They "entertain extremely broad conceptions of 'their' culture and are willing to subsume under it everything, or almost everything…" (Cohen 1979, 192). All cultural or spiritual responses to death and suffering are to them but facets of a broader human spirituality and are thus equally valid. And then there are those dark tourists who adhere to more than one spiritual centre, those who are equally drawn to the meaning structures of two different forms of life, and who are capable of experientially partaking in the meaning structures of the one without feeling alienated from the other.

The above account is intended to suggest that Cohen's phenomenological framework can be applied without much difficulty, or conceptual reordering, to dark tourist experiences. There are, however, certain areas where his account might benefit from some conceptual clarification and development in order to provide a more comprehensive grasp on the phenomenology of the dark tourist. And it is to these areas that I turn in the next section.

12.4   The Phenomenological Significance of the Dark Tourist Site

A recurrent problem in contemporary analyses of dark tourism concerns the problem of demarcating dark tourism from other forms of tourist activity. Some sites seem to combine both dark and light touristic elements, for instance, and some tourist itineraries take in both dark tourist and mass tourist elements, thus making it hard to determine whether dark tourism was the primary motivation behind the individual tourist's activity.

One of the benefits of using Cohen's phenomenological framework as a model for the analysis of dark tourist experiences, I argue, is that it can accommodate such variation in the experience of both the individual tourist site and of the overall journey, of which the visit to a particular site forms a part. The tourist's experience of a dark tourism site can have more than one mode, as can their experience of a touristic journey in its entirety. I also suggest that Cohen's approach points to a way of addressing the demarcation issue in dark tourism in a way that preserves dark tourism's peculiarities with regards to more mainstream forms of tourist activities whilst at the same time treating it as an extension of "normal" patterns of tourist experiences rather than as an

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[7] This in turn raises opportunities for further research into the divergences between the dark tourist's intended experience and the experience actually encountered at the dark tourism site.

aberration or exception. By focusing on the issue of tourist intentionality, and the role that tourist activity plays in relation to the individual tourist's worldview, Cohen places emphasis in his analysis of the tourist experience on the issue of signification. In other words, what does *this* tour or *this* tourist site signify to the tourist? What role do they play in relation to the individual tourist's intersubjective structures of meaning and intentional projects?

Cohen's emphasis on signification draws attention to the extent to which the tourist site is experienced phenomenologically as a sign. This is an aspect of tourism that tends to be overlooked by approaches such as EOR (engineered or orchestrated remembrance) which, by concentrating on the construction of dark tourist sites, neglects tourist intentionality. Seaton (2018) argues that the dark tourist never encounters death, but rather the engineered remembrance of mortality. Consequently, it is to the engineering of the dark tourist site that we should pay heed, not death, because there is nothing to be seen beyond the site itself. Seaton, I suggest, conflates the object of the dark tourist's journey (the dark tourist site) with its end. As MacCannell noted in his analysis of the function of the tourist object, the tourist site serves primarily as a sign which points beyond itself to the ineffable. Cohen's framework reminds us that the experiential significance of a tourist site, dark or otherwise, is largely contingent upon that which it signifies. And that, in turn, is contingent upon the intentional terminus of the tourist's intentional project. For the tourist, the tourist site serves as a point of access to something that is not materially present at the site. As Schutz notes, "it is the meaning of our experiences, and not the ontological structure of the objects, which constitutes reality" (Schutz 1962, 341).

In a dark tourism context, Seaton's claim that the arrangement of the site is the key to understanding the phenomenon of dark tourism due to the fact that we never encounter death is akin to claiming that the pilgrim never encounters God or a spiritual centre on their travels, only people and sites. This in turn is a consequence of Seaton's assumption that dark tourism is primarily concerned with recollection. If dark tourism is concerned with encountering the dead (rather than death), and if the dead cannot be encountered directly given their location in the past, then all that can be encountered is the memory of the dead. Hence dark tourism is about recollection, and analyses of dark tourism should concern themselves with the ways in which these acts of remembrance are materially organized by the tourism site. Whilst I would not wish to dispute the fact that a significant part of the dark tourist experience might well involve recollection, I do take issue with Seaton's claim that such recollection constitutes the entirety of the dark tourist experience. If the dark tourist's encounter with the dark tourism site can be characterized by a desire to encounter death, whether it be their own death or death in a more abstract sense as the terminal point of their culture or life on earth, then the act is fundamentally projective in nature, rather than recollective. In this sense, the dark tourist experience is marked by futurity.

A further question that arises from the dark tourist site's significative function in the dark tourist's intentional scheme is the way in which it signifies. It has been noted that many tourist sites contain dark elements, and thus the parameters that constitute dark tourism can be drawn so broadly as to exclude very little. The phenomenological analysis of dark tourist sites as signs that play a role in the tourist's intentional project suggests a way of demarcating dark tourist from non-dark tourist experiences by analysing

the type of sign that the site represents for the dark tourist. In demarcating dark tourist experiences, one should include as dark only those touristic experiences where the site operates in a manner that is either indicative or referential.

As a symbol, the dark tourist site has two components; the object or site of the event commemorated, and its pair, "an idea which transcends our experience of everyday life" (Schutz 1962, 331). The key to grasping a symbol lies in experiencing it existentially in its intentional referentiality. For those tourists who experience the site as referential, the site appears to them as a symbolic object of major relevance to which they are oriented. The significance of the dark tourist object/site lies in the way in which it points beyond the everyday world to its pair, which exists in a province of meaning that transcends the everyday world. The nature of the transcendent pair is not directly relevant, it might be an entity, an idea, a person, etc. The point is that for those tourists for whom the dark tourist site operates as a referential symbol, the transcendent pair is death-related. This last point might seem rather obvious. After all, it is the death-relatedness of the dark tourism site that makes it a dark tourism site. For example, it is hard to imagine how a dark tourist site featuring gallows could not refer to death or suffering. The point I am trying to make by introducing the notion of the referentiality of the dark tourist site is that the site refers symbolically to death (in some form) in the intentional project of the tourist.

The alternative to sites that symbolize referentially are those that signify indicatively. In such a case, the site is likewise paired with a transcendent object, but the relationship is opaque to the tourist. The relationship to death is still present, but the tourist is not oriented towards it as an object of major relevance in their experience. For tourists for whom dark tourist sites signify in an indicative manner, the sites' connection to death and suffering might be present to them but at a remove. It might, for instance, appear in a purely historical or factual manner, e.g., "people died here," or even, "people die." But it appears as a neutral feature of objective existence, something that occurs to other people, as opposed to a necessary part of one's own existence. The site still refers to death but does so in a peripheral way. The dark tourism site might well refer in the recreational or diversionary modes of dark tourist experience to tourists visiting Stone's dark fun factories, dark exhibitions, and dark dungeons. Or alternatively, death might be referred to by the site within the tourist's intentional scheme, but in such an opaque way that the connection is not immediately present in the tourist's experience. As an example, consider Raine's category of dark tourist that they term "retreaters," those who seek out cemeteries because they find them peaceful, a place to escape and recharge (2013, 251). Doubtless if one was to draw such a dark tourist's attention to the presence of the gravestones, they would recall that the gravestones indicate the dead, etc. However, this referential connection, though indicated, is experienced as of minor relevance.

Of course, one can imagine a situation in which a dark tourist site or object changed from indicative to referential in a tourist's intentional scheme. Schutz describes the possibility of an experience of "shock," a moment of radical transformation when we jolt from one province of meaning to another (Schutz 1962, 231–232, 343–344). Such an experience might occur when a dark tourist site or object ceases to merely indicate death in the background of our intentional project and moves death to the foreground. The gravestone beside us ceases to be merely an object in our visual field and becomes

a reference to a person who once existed, etc. Or the dark fun factory suddenly ceases to be a form of macabre amusement and instead engenders an awareness of the inevitability of one's own demise. One can imagine several such stages of shock as a dark tourist moves through the various modes of dark tourist experience from recreational to existential. Before moving on to the issue of the transcendence experienced in the significative function of the dark tourist site, I suggest in summary that the term "dark tourism" be applied only to those tourists in whose projects the site signifies, either referentially or indicatively, death or suffering.[8]

12.5   The Phenomenology of Transcendence

In the preceding section, I argued that the dark tourism site or object acts as a sign pointing beyond the workaday world to something that transcends it. I would now like to explore in more detail the forms of transcendence present in the touristic experience of dark sites. Following Luckmann (1990), I suggest that the forms of transcendence can be understood as lying on a range from little, to intermediate, to great. I argue that an awareness of the different kinds of transcendence present in such experiences is central to a thorough understanding of the dark tourist experience and that an awareness of their role significantly supplements the use of Cohen's phenomenological framework for the analysis of dark tourist experiences.

   Transcendence, in the phenomenological sense in which it is employed here, refers to the ways in which human beings experience the boundaries and limitations of their existence. No perceptual experience is ever entirely enclosed, and we are aware at all times of things, events, etc. that occur in the world beyond the range of our current experience. Our present experience contains elements of the past that directly preceded it and anticipatory elements of the immediate future. As Luckmann puts it, "There is a 'before' and 'after' and 'behind' one's ongoing actual experience, and there is a 'before' and 'after' one's own life. We do not doubt that the world into which we were born existed long before we became aware of its existence, and we do not expect the world to end when our consciousness of it will end" (Luckmann 1990, 128). From consideration of a book that is lying beyond my sight in the next room, to concern with another's motives, to reflections on the afterlife, human subjective experience is universally permeated by transcendences. On this account, the ways in which a dark tourist site signifies in the experience of the dark tourist are directly connected to the form of transcendence present.

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[8]There are of course other ways in which a dark tourist site or object could signify. One can imagine a situation in which a tree was planted to commemorate a loved one, or a particular stream known from childhood held some significant reference to mortality. These "marks," as Schutz terms them, would indeed signify but would have no meaning outside the individual's subjective interpretational scheme (1962, 308–309). In short, they would not serve as signs in an intersubjective context of meaning.

The first mode of transcendence concerns the little transcendences of time and space that occur within an individual's everyday world.[9] In this mode, whatever is taken to be transcending that which is concretely given in our direct experience is viewed as being of the same order. In other words, whatever it is that transcends my immediate experience is taken to be something that is or was capable of being experienced in the same way as that which is directly given. The point to stress here is that the transcendent object of experience lies just outside *my* direct experience, i.e. it operates at a subjective experiential level, rather than an intersubjective one, within the everyday world of meaning. Intermediate transcendences, on the other hand, involve transcendent objects of experience that lie beyond the realm of purely subjective experience and involve engagement with the alterity of other humans. For instance, however well we know another person, there will always remain an irreducible element, an aspect of their personality and inner life that cannot be brought within my grasp, "an inaccessible zone of the Other's private life" (Schutz 1962, 326). The transcendent in this case concerns objects of human experience that I cannot and could not experience directly, namely the transcendent experiences of others. An important feature that intermediate transcendences share with little transcendences is that both involve transcendent objects that belong to the same everyday reality that we directly experience. It is with great transcendences that the transcendent object of experience cannot and could not be experienced in everyday reality. Here the immanent object points to an object that lies in a separate province of meaning beyond everyday reality. The symbol, in this instance, acts as a bridge between different horizons of meaning.

With regards to the analysis of the various modes of the dark tourist experience, the modes of transcendence can be applied as follows. On the one hand, we have "this-worldly" transcendences, transcendences of the little or intermediate sort, and on the other, "other-worldly" or "supernatural" transcendences, transcendences of the great sort. The first this-worldly mode concerns what Luckmann terms the "minimal transcendencies of modern solipsism," dark tourist experiences that occur at a private, subjective level (Luckmann 1990, 135). Those engaged in dark tourism at this level seek an experience within the private sphere, an emotional response or sensational effect that never moves beyond their personal field of meaning. This mode of transcendence is common with recreational or diversionary dark tourists.

Intermediate dark tourist transcendences occur at the communal level and involve experiences within a shared horizon of meaning. Intermediate transcendences, like the traditional great transcendences of religion, may well involve "distinct views of a moral order," that is to say, structures of meaning and "'ultimate' significance" (Luckmann 1990, 134–135). However, they remain very much at the level of everyday reality. Such transcendences may involve objects such as "nation (nationalism), social class (social mobility or the classless society), family ('familism'), other people ('togetherness'), and the 'sacralized' self ('self-fulfilment')" (Luckmann 1990, 135). It is with this mode

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[9] "[W]henever anything that transcends that which at the moment is concretely given in actual, direct experience can be itself experienced in the same manner as that which it now transcends, one may speak of the 'little', spatial and temporal, transcendences of everyday life" (Luckmann 1990, 129).

of transcendence that we are most likely to encounter Seaton's commemorative dark tourism, with tourist experiences where the site signifies the dead (i.e. the fact of the death of others). Although it should be noted that insofar as the dead thus signified can also signify a broader, possibly extant, category of humans to whom the tourist may belong or desire to belong to, this commemoration also contains a projective element.[10]

With great dark tourism transcendences, the dark site refers to something that transcends everyday reality and could not, ordinarily, be directly experienced. It is with this mode of transcendence that the dark site refers to death and human suffering at a more authentic, existential level. It is in this mode that the tourist seeks to encounter death, in the sense of absolute finitude and limitedness as opposed to the dead, and to orient themselves towards the phenomenon in a way that their experience of it is structured and made meaningful. It is this mode of transcendence, I suggest, that is either sought or encountered in the existential mode of the dark tourist experience.

It should be noted that, as with Cohen's modes of the tourist experience, the modes of transcendence have been separated for analytic purposes and, in reality, a dark tourist might experience several concurrently. MacCannell has suggested that all forms of tourism experience involve a communal dimension, and not simply in the sense that all tourist experiences are ordered by shared structures of meaning. For MacCannell, all touristic activity involves a "collective striving for a transcendence of the modern totality, a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuity of modernity" (MacCannell 1999, 13). On MacCannell's account, regardless of which mode of transcendence one seeks or actually experiences, part of the motivation in visiting a tourist site is that one's attendance is participatory. Even if my experience of transcendence at Robben Island is little, and yours is grand, we are both bound at the intermediate level by a shared experience of an object that is deemed to be significant. We both transcend our individuality and enter into symbolic communion with those others who have experienced Robben Island. And in so doing, we bring order to our social reality by firstly differentiating ourselves from others (those who have not experienced Robben Island), and secondly establishing a point of experiential convergence with others, on the basis of which a new social grouping may be formed (MacCannell 1999, 26–27). If MacCannell is correct, then intermediate transcendence will be experienced by dark tourists in all of Cohen's modes of tourist experience and, by extension, all modes of the dark tourist experience.

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[10]Though there is no space to discuss it properly here, the phenomenological analysis of dark tourism in terms of modes of tourist experience offers the possibility of moving beyond Western-centric forms of thanatourism and accommodating other cultural forms of dark tourism. For instance, in cultures in which ancestor worship is prevalent, the dead operate as social actors and thus could be accommodated within the intermediate mode of transcendence as contemporaries with whom we share in a communal experience via the dark tourism site (Schutz 1962, 318).

12.6   Conclusion

This paper explored the phenomenon of dark tourism by investigating the experiences of dark tourists. It argued that these experiences could be productively analysed by employing a phenomenological approach. More specifically, it proposed repurposing Cohen's (1979) framework for the analysis of tourist experiences in order to investigate dark tourist experiences. It argued that Cohen's understanding of tourist experiences in terms of adherence to or distance from spiritual centres also applied to dark tourist experiences. It further suggested that such a phenomenological approach could also clarify the ways in which the dark site signifies within the experience of the tourist, and that a consideration of the significatory function of the site pointed to the fundamental role of transcendence within the dark tourist experience. It used a span of modes of transcendence to supplement Cohen's phenomenological framework. Given the complexity of the dark tourist experience, this paper can only be suggestive rather than definitive, but one hopes that the phenomenological analysis sketched here might serve for a more detailed analysis of the dark tourist experience.

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