Reconceptualising Interpretation: The Role of Tour Guides in Authentic Tourism

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The aim of this paper is to reconceptualise interpretation as one of the major functions of a tour guide. The paper is based on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1996). It suggests that tour guides in their current incarnation might be largely superfluous in authentic tourism. The reconceptualisation of interpretation by adopting Heidegger's philosophy promises to enhance the role of tour guides in authentic tourism and enrich the tourism experiences. Special attention is paid to unusual tour guides working in Israel.

doi: 10.2167/cit280.0

Keywords: interpretation, tour guides, authentic tourism

Introduction

Authentic tourism has fascinated tourism scholars for several decades (Arsenault, 2003; Berger, 1973; Berman, 1970; Brown, 1996; Crang, 1996; Dann, 2002; Handler, 1986; Hughes, 1995; Laenen, 1989; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Pons, 2003; Ryan, 2000; Turner & Manning, 1988; Venkatesh, 1992; Wang, 1996, 1999). Authentic tourism refers not to consumption of the real or genuine (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) but rather to individual and personal tourist experiences that contribute to one's sense of identity and connectedness with the world (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

The authors suggest that the individual and personal dimension of authentic tourism should extend to people making up their own minds about how they experience and interpret the toured world. Of course, this could mean that tour guides in their current incarnation might be largely superfluous in authentic tourism. But it might be a worthwhile philosophical exercise to examine what tour guides do, see what that tells us about the concepts of meaning-making and interpretation, and perhaps recast their role to find a place for them in authentic tourism, drawing on an Israeli model.

Finding a role for tour guides in authentic tourism calls for a rethink of what tour guides most commonly do. It also calls for a reconceptualisation of interpretation as a tour guide responsibility. The reconceptualisation the authors

1466-4208/06/06 0481-18 $20.00/0
Current Issues in Tourism

offer is based on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1996) who has quite unusual ideas about how people as human beings understand and interpret experience.

This philosophical paper will first outline the roles and responsibilities of tour guides as reflected in tourism literature. Next, it will explore conventional ideas about meaning-making and interpretation as they relate to the work of tour guides. Then, it will outline Heidegger's concepts of understanding and interpretation. Finally, it will make some preliminary suggestions on how a reconceptualisation of interpretation might affect the role of tour guides, with special attention paid to unusual tour guides working in Israel.

The Role of Tour Guides

Tour guides have been described as information givers, sources of knowledge, mentors, surrogate parents, pathfinders, leaders, mediators, culture brokers and entertainers (Cohen, 1985; DeKadt, 1979; McKean, 1976; Nettekoven, 1979; Schuchat, 1983). Pond (1993) says tour guides help tourists to understand the places they visit. Holloway (1981) notes that information giving is of greatest importance in the tour guides' drive for professional status. Wang *et al.* (2002) report that tour guides' presentation skills could make or break a tour.

According to Cohen (1985), tour guides serve four major functions: instrumental, social, interactionary, and communicative. Cohen also identifies four types of guides who focus on one of each of these functions: Originals, Animators, Tour Leaders, and Professionals. Originals are pathfinders who perform primarily the instrumental function. Their task is to ensure that tourists reach their destination and return safely. They are often called pathbreakers because they select the route and the attractions and make them accessible to tourists. However, they point out objects of interest without offering elaborate explanations. Animators perform the social function by interacting and socialising with tourists, being friendly, listening and respecting their preferences. Tour Leaders perform the interactionary function by facilitating interaction among tourists and with the environment. Professionals perform the communicative function, which involves transferring detailed information (e.g. telling and explaining to tourists where, when and why to look, how to behave) and interpreting attractions, sites and experiences. Cohen (1985) claims Professionals are similar to mentors, but while the original role of the mentor was spiritual and intellectual guidance, the communicative function of the professional/mentor tour guide has four components: (1) selection of the itinerary (what to see and experience, as well as what not to see); (2) dissemination of correct and precise information; (3) interpretation of what is seen and experienced; and (4) fabrication, that is, presenting fake information as though it were genuine/true.

The International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) and the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (EFTGA) define a tour guide as a person who 'interprets in an inspiring and entertaining manner, in the language of the visitors' choice, the cultural and natural heritage and environment' (IATM, EFTGA, 1998). The Professional Tour Guide Association of San Antonio (1997) refers to a tour guide as a person who leads groups while providing interpretation and commentary. Weiler and Ham (2000: 1) believe 'Interpretation lies at

the heart and soul of what any good tour guide can and should be doing' and say the interpretive skills of tour guides can enhance the quality of tourists' experiences.

According to Ap and Wong (2001), mediating and culture broking are two interpretive functions of the tour guides' work. Tour guides mediate between tourists and locals and the environment. Mediating moves beyond telling tourists how to think and feel about their experiences; it is about leading them to their own conclusions and letting them learn. Culture broking is the act of bridging, linking or mediating between groups or persons of differing cultural backgrounds for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change (Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001). A culture broker is someone who can communicate effectively and translate knowledge and skills from one culture to another (Wyatt, 1978/79), take mainstream values and communicate them to ethnic cultures, and communicate ethnic culture to the mainstream (Gentemann & Whitehead, 1983). A culture broker thoroughly understands different cultural systems, is able to interpret cultural systems from one frame of reference to another, can mediate cultural incompatibilities, and knows how to build bridges or establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instructional process (Gay, 1993). The culture broking role covers more than being a language interpreter, although this is an important attribute in cross-cultural situations where language is a problem. Some people suggest that culture brokers are 'interpreting' the culture (Michie, 2004).

Ap and Wong (2001) and Kimmel (undated) believe tour guides' interpretive work plays a vital role in enhancing visitors' experience and understanding of a destination and its culture. Ap and Wong (2001) say tour guides, through their knowledge and understanding of a destination's attractions and culture and through their communication skills, transform tourists' visits from tours into experiences. Moscardo (1998) identifies three main ways in which interpretation can contribute to the quality of visitors' experience. These are: (1) providing information on the available options so tourists can make the best choices about what they do and where they go; (2) providing information to encourage safety and comfort so tourists know how to cope with and better manage encountered difficulties (e.g. sea sickness) and understand messages given by the warning signs (e.g. 'you cannot swim here'); and (3) creating the actual experience so tourists can participate in activities such as guided walks, ecotours, visit art galleries, fauna sanctuaries or zoos, and learn in areas of educational interest. Moscardo (1996: 382) claims that 'interpretation is trying to produce mindful visitors; visitors who are active, questioning and capable of reassessing the way they view the world'. In other words, interpretation of information can give tourists new insights and understandings of the area they visit and the culture and environment they experience.

Many scholars are very enthusiastic about tour guides and their contribution to tourist experiences. For example, some claim that tour guides' interpretation contributes to the sustainable wildlife tourism (Moscardo *et al.*, 2004). Others believe the interpretation contributes to managing the interactions between wildlife and tourists, behaving in way that minimises visitor impact on environment, explaining management strategies and supporting safety messages (McArthur & Hall, 1993; Moscardo, 1998). Gray (1993) argues that interpreta-

tion can raise visitors' knowledge and awareness of wildlife and encourage pro-conservation attitudes. According to Ham (1992) and Moscardo (1998), interpretation enhances visitor satisfaction and contributes to the commercial viability of tourism operations. There are also reports that the interpretation programs resulted in less coral damage in areas along the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea (Newsome *et al.*, 2002 cited in Moscardo *et al.*, 2004) and that zoo interpretational programmes encouraged greater knowledge of wildlife and awareness of wildlife conservation issuse (Kreger & Mench, 1995). De White and Jacobson (1994) note that learning about elephants was greater when zoo visitors experienced a structured, participatory education programme about the elephants rather than mere exposure to the elephants in their normal display areas with traditional signs.

While most tourism literature is supportive of tour guides and their contribution to tourist experience, some dissenting voices have also been raised.

According to McIntosh and Prentice (1999), a sense of a place is conveyed formally rather than organically in guided tourism. Consequently, tourists' understanding of what they experience depends on the subjective and replicated interpretations of their tour guides, which 'although contested by professionals, are commodified for mass consumption' (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999: 2). Breheny (1998) suggests zoo animal demonstrations and activities can encourage visitors to think about the animals as pets rather than as natural creatures in their habitats.

There is also an argument that guided tours could be effective instruments used by governments to control tourists and their contacts with a host society and to disseminate images and information preferred by the authorities. For example, Dahles (2002) reports that the Indonesian Government uses tourism strategically to address or promote issues of national significance and develop a desired national identity. Formal guides are trained by the Government to provide politically and ideologically correct narratives. They keep a carefully established boundary between tourists and local communities. They act as buffers between tourists and the local environment and reduce opportunities for social interaction between tourists and hosts. Indonesian guides are supposed to convey messages to tourists without questioning them, with a complete disregard for tourists' interests or the truth. Indonesian authorities promote guides who operate standardised and well-managed tours to reproduce well-rehearsed narratives.

Some scholars point out that tour guides may have their own agendas based on their country's sociocultural, historical, political and economic contexts or on their employment situation (e.g. Ap & Wong, 2001). Their interpretations may be self-serving or conformist narratives. In addition, the general enthusiasm for tour guides is not supported by research on the effectiveness of tour guides. Ryan and Dewar (1995) analysed the informational effectiveness of interpreters at historic sites. They found a poor correlation between the interpreters' competency skills and information learnt by visitors. Malcolm-Davies (2004), who examined the extent to which costumed interpreters contributed to tourists' experiences at historic sites, reported that costumed interpreters have succeeded in providing an historical atmosphere and a sense of the past but failed to provide enough learning. Visitors to historic sites demanded more

interactive experiences and fun. In contrast, Almagor (1985) found guides to be unsuccessful, even redundant, mediators in 'vision quest' tourism. He identified many frictions between Tswana guides in the Moremi Wildlife Reserve of Botswana and South African visitors to the reserve. The guides wanted to act as interpreters while tourists wanted them to play the menial roles of assistant and servant they played in the tourists' home country.

The positive view of tour guides seems to be predicated on two assumptions that the authors would like to challenge in this paper. First, the suggestion that tour guides enhance tourist experiences seems to assume that tourists are not capable of interpreting the alien worlds they visit or will have a less rich or incorrect experience if someone does not explain what they are experiencing. Second, the mere existence of tour guides assumes that the meaning of tourist experience can and should be constructed outside the experience rather than emerge from within it. The former assumption is at odds with the whole idea of authentic tourism as a quest for identity and self-fulfilment (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). The latter assumption is a common characteristic of what Heidegger (1977a) calls 'the age of the world picture', which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

The Concept of Interpretation in Tourism

The Society for Interpreting Britain's Heritage defines interpretation as 'the process of communicating to people the significance of a place or object so that they enjoy it more, understand their heritage and environment better, and develop a positive attitude toward conservation' (cited in Moscardo, 1999: 8). This definition assumes there is a 'correct' significance of a place or object that must be known before people can enjoy or understand their experience. There is also an ulterior motive for offering the interpretation: to influence the tourists' attitude towards conservation.

Some scholars claim interpretation is an important educational tool for providing visitors with sufficient information in environmental or nature-based tourism (Moscardo *et al.*, 2004). They say interpretation provides quality information on the natural environment for tourists, while programmers help in developing informative trails, information packs, brochures, signs and all sorts of materials about the local environment and nature. This is done to facilitate the management of visitors and their impacts on the environment and its resources by providing visitors with information on where to go, how to behave, and highlighting the consequences of behaviour that creates a negative impact on environment. They say interpretation is frequently used in places like zoos, museums, heritage sites and national parks, to tell visitors about the significance or meanings of what they are experiencing. It contributes to sustainable wildlife tourism and encourages greater knowledge of environment and awareness of conservation issues and ethics. Moscardo (1998) and Moscardo *et al.* (2004) have an informational sense of interpretation. The idea that interpretation can be used to control behaviour seems manipulative in the Indonesian sense (Dahles, 2002).

It has also being claimed that interpretation provides a substitute experience, informing visitors about appropriate behaviours and developing visitor concern

(Moscardo, 1998). The very idea of 'substitute experience' seems incompatible with authentic tourism, and the unpleasant flavour of more right-thinking interpreters shaping, controlling and even manipulating tourists' experiences cannot be ignored.

It is believed interpretation is a planned effort to create for the visitor an understanding of the history and significance of events, people, and objects with which the site is associated (Alderson & Low, 1985). They say it is a fundamental function of heritage tourism activities. According to Knudson *et al.* (1995), interpretation serves as translation of the natural and cultural environment, which transforms recreation from mundane fun to intelligent use of leisure, and from appreciation of the cultural and natural environment to merely understanding it. The Network for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Tourism (undated) argues that cultural interpretation explains to visitors the diversity of cultures in foreign countries, and the diversity of cultures among the visitors to the locals who interact with them. The Network also suggests nature interpretation provides quality information on the natural environment through informative trails, information brochures, signs and other interpretative materials. According to Shafernich (1993) cited in Malcolm-Davies (2004), costumed interpreters play an important role in contributing atmosphere to visitors' experiences at historic sites. These views emphasise the constructed nature of interpretation.

It has also been claimed that interpretation can contribute to ecological and cultural sustainability in tourism by minimising and managing impacts of visitor behaviour and influencing long-term conservation (Weiler & Ham, 2001). For Inskeep (1991) interpretation provides a quality of experience for visitors by improving the quality of life of the host community and protecting the quality of the environment, by offering the opportunity to learn about people's bonds to the environment or to their history and culture, and by encouraging continued visitor interest in the activity. For Moscardo (1998) interpretation contributes to the quality of visitors' experiences by providing information on alternatives and options, safety and comfort, and creating the actual experience. Stewart *et al.* (1998) agree that the goal of interpretation is to increase visitor awareness, promote learning, appreciation and understanding of places so that tourists develop empathy towards heritage, conservation, culture and landscape.

It is believed that interpretation differs from environmental education in that it is provided in an informal fashion to people who are at leisure; an important element of interpretation is enjoyment (Ham, 1992). According to Ham (1992) and Moscardo (1998), interpretation enhances visitor satisfaction. To achieve this, Moscardo (1999) believes interpretation should incorporate differences into interpretative experiences, provide personal connections for visitors, practise participation, create clear content, and allow for alternative audiences. She claims providing variety in the interpretative experiences is a very important way to encourage mindfulness. Here the promise of fun and more personal engagement seems to be more compatible with authentic tourism than what came before, but these positives are undermined by the ulterior motive of sustaining commercial viability which suggests that manipulation rather than authentic experience is the objective.

It has been argued, 'Effective interpretation enables visitors to make connec-

tions between the information being given and their previous knowledge and experiences' (Moscardo *et al.*, 2004: 13). This can be achieved by using clear, simple explanations to reduce the gap between the information and visitors' current knowledge. Also, humour, analogies, metaphors, opportunities to ask questions, provision of variety, and structuring logically presented information help to build links between the interpretative content and the everyday experience of visitors. These deceptively encouraging words lose some of their appeal when one realises that Moscardo *et al.* (2004) are not advocating that tourists make links between their experiences and their current knowledge but rather between someone else's interpretations and their current knowledge. The tourists' own unmediated experiences do not figure in this sense of interpretation and the overall scenario is highly rational in flavour.

These notions about interpretation seem to assume that tourists will experience alien destinations, cultures, events, artefacts, cuisine and behaviour as unpleasantly mystifying. They seem to believe that tourists are either unwilling or incapable of working out for themselves what things mean, or they believe that tourists are incapable of coming up with the 'right' interpretation without them.

But the literature also offers alternative concepts of interpretation that leave more room for experiences to speak for themselves, with interpretation serving a quite different purpose. Edwards (1979) cited in Moscardo (1998) said, 'The job of interpretation is to open the minds of people so they can receive the interesting signals that the world is constantly sending'. According to the National Park Service, interpretation facilitates a connection 'between the interests of the visitor and the meanings of the resource', echoing the National Association for Interpretation definition: 'a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings in the resource' (Kimmel (undated) at http://nature tourism.tamu.edu/ntiusefulresources/interpintro.htm). These post-humanist views decentre the interpreter in favour of the experience.

According to Tilden, interpretation is an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships to people about the places they visit and the things they see 'through the use of original objects, by first hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information' (1977: 8).

> The visitor ultimately is seeing things through his own eyes, not those of the interpreter, and he [*sic*] is forever and finally translating your words as best he can into whatever he can refer to his own intimate knowledge and experience. (Tilden, 1977: 14)

Tilden believes relevance and audience involvement are essential for interpretation to be effective.

These various views of interpretation speak to the potential of interpretation to facilitate and encourage authentic tourism. In what follows, Heidegger's concept of interpretation is discussed and echoes some of the views above but also goes much further in reconceptualising interpretation away from people-centred, rational construction of meaning to a more individual, immediate and participative approach to interpreting experience.

Heidegger's Concept of Interpretation

Heidegger's unusual notion of interpretation requires familiarity with his sense of how the world is and how people are. Heidegger (1996: 59–83) sees the world holistically, as an interconnected network of things and human purposes whose connections come to us from history and pre-exist our experiences of them. Things get their significance from their place in the network, from their historical relatedness to other things, not from us when we encounter them.

Significance is not the same as meaning for Heidegger. Rather, significance defines the very being of things; things are as they are related to other things, and no thing exists discretely. All things are connected and have significance only when they are so connected (Heidegger, 1996: 81–3). All the relations that bind together the things of the world and grant them significance are residues of past human experiences, preserved in memories, culture, socialisation, education, art and literature, in paradigms of practice, and in language.

People experience the significance of the world as possibilities. The significance of the world allows us to do things, to be things, to think things. Our possibilities are a product of the context of things in the world that renders things capable of being used in fruitful, helpful ways. This is why Heidegger (1996: 62–7) calls the realm of significant things 'equipment' or useful 'stuff'.

Heidegger (1996: 126–56) sees people as the 'place' in which this interconnected world of things and historical human purposes is brought to light. People are an empty space – a there – that must be filled with the world to have meaning. The world brought to light in us makes *us* meaning-full. Meaning is what can be understood when the world comes to light within the distinctive there of an individual.

How the world seems to us is determined in part by the kind of place we make for it, by how we project ourselves: as authentic individuals, unique and decisive (Heidegger, 1996: 247–77); or as inauthentic conformists, thinking and being like others who subscribe to the same identity: bank manager, academic, lawyer, Catholic, feminist, and so on (Heidegger, 1996: 156–68). Authentic tourism is predicated on tourists' desire to project themselves as authentic individuals rather than as members of some tourist class.

Graphically expressed (and vastly simplified) in Figure 1 below, the interconnected world of things and human purposes is represented by the joined circles, while projections of different human identities are represented by the differing shapes that contain the worldly things. Each projection/shape might be a different person, or it might be the same person seeing themselves differently at different moments.

The point is that different areas of the world are brought to light within the projected presence of different human identities. How we see ourselves affects how we see the world, what significance the world has for us, what possibilities we have. Tourists who see themselves as authentic will experience the world differently from tourists who see themselves as members of a tour group or who identify with some generalised tourist persona. Heidegger maintains that when we are authentic, we have more and richer possibilities because our possibilities can be unique and myriad when we project ourselves on the whole network of significance that constitutes our world. In contrast, when we are

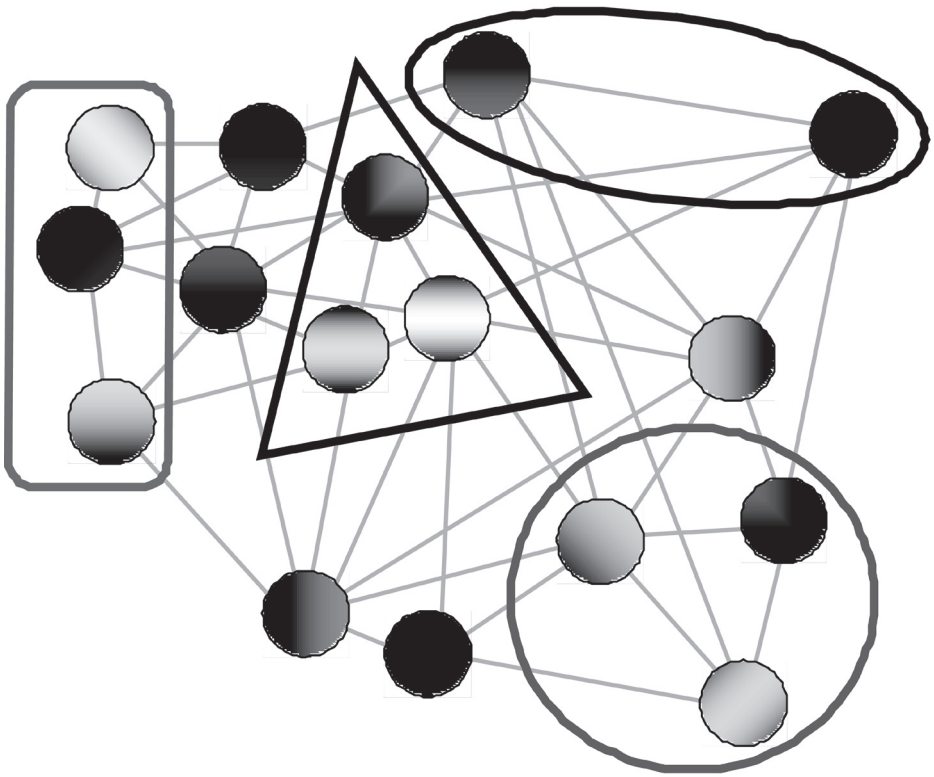

Figure 1 The interconnected world and human projections

inauthentic, our possibilities are 'averaged and leveled down' to accommodate the experiences of those who share our identity, whom Heidegger (1996: 118–22) calls 'the they'.

The intimate, co-determining relationship between people and the world – the world making people meaningful and people bringing the significance of the world to light – is of central importance to our belief that tour guides and interpretation need to be reconceptualised to have relevance to authentic tourism. In authentic tourism, tour guides who interpret must not mediate between the world and the individual bringing it to light.

According to Heidegger's account of the world and people, the connectedness of the world, its significance, is historical and social, but our experience of it always has the potential to be unique and personal, unless we opt to project ourselves as an inauthentic persona or identity. Depending on our projection, our experiences of the same thing can have different significance because our projection brings to light different relations which determine how things are in their infinite complexity and diversity. We never experience the full significance of anything, even when we project ourselves openly and uniquely.

Just seeing the world, experiencing it, is what Heidegger (1996: 134–9) calls 'understanding'. To understand something is to experience it as it is, to let it be

as it is, even to use it as it is, immediately and without mental processing. We understand a food by eating it; we understand a dance by dancing; we understand a tool by using it.

Understanding for Heidegger does not call for a mind, rationality or concepts. It requires only openness to whatever is given us to experience. The most common form of understanding is just getting on with life, doing things, making things, enjoying things. Dreyfus (1991: 3) refers to this everyday understanding as 'mindless coping', not to suggest that it is stupid or ignorant but to say that it has no rational, mental, internal dimension. Understanding happens out here, in the world, hands on, immediately.

When people understand something in that world, they take in its context, what exists around it and relates to it. Understanding is always holistic. Our understanding of the significance of a thing – what it is and what it is for – is determined by that context we experience. Our understanding is not constructed by us during an experience, as an afterthought.

Everything available to understanding has its own place in the interrelated realm of things, people, events and human purposes that constitute a person's historical world. The truth of what people experience is determined by where in the realm of significance something belongs, not by the afterthoughts of tourists or guides. We experience that belonging which creates possibilities for us to understand the thing as it is.

For example, as tourists we experience a tribal chief because she is surrounded by her people in a small village. She is wearing a lion pelt, she has the biggest spear, she has the biggest hut, she has the strongest partners, she has the most children. We experience her as the tribal chief because of all these things and because of her place among them. If we took her out of her context, she would be just another woman, a woman without this significance for us and for herself.

Understanding is usually enough to allow anyone to get along in the world, to function as a human being in any normal situation. But according to Heidegger (1996: 70–71), sometimes things go awry and understanding is not enough. When things are broken or missing or don't work as expected – when there is a break in the interconnected realm of things and human purposes – understanding gives way to interpretation in the quest to understand the significance of what we are experiencing. Touring is far from a normal situation for most tourists and presents myriad opportunities to interpret the alien and unfamiliar worlds that defy understanding. Interpretation is a natural response to a failure of understanding. But Heidegger conceives of interpretation in a completely non-rational way.

For Heidegger (1996: 134–44), to interpret a dysfunctional or alien world does not involve a retreat into the mind. It involves even closer attention to the world around us. To interpret is to notice the links between what we are having trouble understanding and all the related elements that surround it. Interpretation involves following those links explicitly and consciously until we appreciate the full significance of our experience.

Interpretation does not involve bringing to the problem something from outside it, like a theory, expert advice or a quick-fix recipe. Interpretation is not a synthetic process. But it is also not an analytic process. It is not about breaking

down our understanding or experience, nor is it about bringing new insights to the experience, nor is it about looking at the experience through some kind of interpretive filter or framework of meaning. Interpretation is confined to what is given to understanding. Interpretation involves attending more closely to the context of the problem in all its richness until the significance of the experience and the solution to the problem become clear.

Because everything is connected in the world, looking at what you already understand will take you to what else there is to understand. This doesn't mean having another look; it means reflecting on what is already given to your understanding. Much more is given than is appreciated in a momentary experience, so Heidegger urges us to engage with the world more thoughtfully, more reflectively, not settling for instant impressions. In fact, Heidegger (1977b) advocates more reflection and less information giving in our lives, so that our experiences have more significance for us and so we are more meaningful to ourselves.

But there is another way to respond to a dysfunctional or surprising world. Instead of interpreting the interrelatedness of things, the connections that bind things together into a context of significance, we can turn our attention to things themselves as discrete entities. Instead of seeing the tribal chief as situated within her group, wearing the trappings of her office, enjoying the fruits of her status, we can notice instead that she is a woman, that she is young, that she is disabled, that she is wearing a crucifix or speaking fluent English. Now we are not interpreting her as a tribal chief but as a possessor of qualities or characteristics, as a person who is a sum of her parts rather than her holistic context.

When we interpret only discrete things and deny their connectedness and their context of significance, when we just think about them and look at them rather than engage with them, use them or work with them as they are situated within their context, Heidegger (1996: 326–35) says we are *being theoretical*. When being theoretical, our interpretation will be deficient because it lacks significance and context (Heidegger, 1996: 57).

Heidegger (1996: 144–50) says that when we are being theoretical, we feel entitled to make assertions about our experiences. We create representations of our experiences and call them facts. This is the usual way that scientists and researchers operate in the world, focusing on discrete things, even physically or conceptually abstracting things from their contexts to deal with them as things-in-themselves. Doubtless much tour guiding and interpretation are based on scholarly representations and assertions about artefacts, events and destinations, so they are likely to be the deficient products of being theoretical.

Heidegger (1977a: 115–54) further suggests that this way of operating in the world is also becoming more dominant as a mode of everyday existence of ordinary people. He says we live in 'the age of the world picture', in a time when we believe that, on the basis of a little research or experience, we can say how the world is and we can speak objectively and generally, with authority and confidence. The spread of being theoretical is why more and more we have deficient experiences of the world. We wonder if tour guides are not contributing to this problem, or perhaps they are just a response to it.

Towards Authentic Tour Guides and Interpretation

The tourism research on guides and interpretation that focuses on the information function of guides and interpretation (Dahles, 2002; Holloway, 1981; Moscardo *et al.*, 2004), on the 'correctness' of interpretations (Moscardo, 1999; Moscardo *et al.*, 2004), on the constructedness of interpretations (Alderson & Low, 1985; Ap & Wang, 2001; Shafernich, 1993), on the behaviour-shaping role of interpretation (Gray, 1993; Stewart *et al.*, 1998; Weiler & Ham, 2001) or on absolving tourists of the need to interpret for themselves (Dahles, 2002; Moscardo, 1998; Moscardo *et al.*, 2004) is inconsistent with Heidegger's concept of interpretation as something people are capable of doing for themselves by attending more closely to their own understanding of their experiences. Guides discussed in such research are most likely to be theoretical and make assertions about their own experiences or pass on commodified assertions.

Such guides are not likely to be popular with authentic tourists because tourist experiences mediated by interpretation by such guides will be theoretical, arm's-length experiences in which tourists are distanced from the world as they find it by the explanations that represent it as the interpretation deems appropriate. To stand around listening to an interpreter 'explaining' one's experiences is as far as one can get from being purposefully engaged with the world as one finds it and of little assistance in understanding what makes one meaningful as a human being.

In contrast, research that discusses guides and interpretation as a way to open tourists to their encounters with toured objects and sites (Edwards, 1979; Tilden, 1977) is compatible with Heidegger's idea that interpretation is a personal exploration of one's understanding, as is research by Pine and Gilmore (1999). They report that individuals have multi-dimensional engagement with experiences, ranging from active to passive, and from absorption to immersion. But experiencing the world on any of these dimensions – as a passive participant (sightseeing in a local market) or as an active participant (e.g. playing a sport, being absorbed in the music of a concert), or immersed in an exotic culture – never involves standing around listening to tour guides interpret experience for you or reading brochures and labels. Even 'passive' participation involves personal deep engagement – either absorption or immersion. That does not mean doing something with things, using them in some instrumental manner. It means opening oneself to the personal experience offered by the being of what is being 'consumed' rather than imposing a preconceived interpretation on what is being experienced. It involves 'letting be' what is being encountered. This is how Heidegger defines 'understanding'.

Dann (1996) comes closest to a Heideggerian understanding of interpretation when he says guides try to focus on connections to minimise the effects of unfamiliarity. Alderson and Low (1985) claim good interpretation allows the visitor to understand the history and significance of events, people and objects with which a site is associated. This suggests a Heideggerian emphasis on allowing the site to speak for itself, although perhaps there is a faint taint of there being a 'correct' understanding.

In contrast, Cohen (1985) saying tour guides translate the 'strangeness of a foreign culture into culturally familiar codes to the visitors' sounds too intrusive

on the being of the foreign culture. To a lesser extent, Ham (1992), claiming that good tour guides use a lot of examples and comparisons to interpret the unfamiliar world in terms of things with which their visitors are familiar, suggests insufficient respect for the integrity of the unfamiliar world and for the capacity of tourists to understand it. According to Cohen and others (2002), guides must know geography, history, culture and/or architecture of a destination, especially in developed and mature destinations where the transfer of information to tourists is crucial for understanding the established attractions and the destination's character and uniqueness. They also report such guides must have knowledge in sociology and psychology, including group dynamics, motivation, and cultural and ethnic background. All such knowledge would be helpful in finding (not making) connections between what is being experienced and what tourists already know, especially if the tour guides used it to draw attention to attractions' and destinations' character and uniqueness. But perhaps the most Heideggerian types of tour guide have been found in Israel.

A unique kind of Israeli teacher-guide was identified by Katz (1985). This type of a guide has emerged in response to a high public demand for feeling a sense of belonging. These guides conduct special walks in Israel to educate locals about their own country and its culture while interpreting scenes and their meanings. The Israeli teacher-guide is an agent of education and culture rather than of leisure and entertainment. This type of guide performs the function of *tiyulim*, which means a 'journey'. The teacher-guide takes tourists on an excursion through the state of Israel that opens them to the spiritual link between them and the landscape of their homeland.

A related type of tour guide called a 'role model' guide or *madrich* was identified by Cohen *et al*. (2002). Madrichs are informal counsellor-guides who accompany adolescent study tours from other countries to Israel. In most cases they are students recruited for only a few months. Madrichs and tour participants are of a similar age and share a similar religion and ideology. Madrichs are not traditional guides, pathfinders or mentors/tutors, although they have some characteristics common to such guides. They are informal educators, friends and peers. They have special status as a guide because of their knowledge of the language and country. Their main role is not to lead the tour or transmit information but to accompany it, informally educate participants, help to explain the country and experiences, facilitate the search for identity, spark debate and promote discussion. The main functions of madrichs are leadership, social interaction and mediation. Mediation involves facilitating the group's communication, learning about Judaism and Israel, and understanding the Jewish community, as well as helping participants with self-exploration and encouraging them to take on responsibilities in the Jewish community.

Traditional guides supplement madrichs in specific sites to organise the components of the tour such as accommodation, food or transportation. The influence of traditional guides on the tour is minimal. Although madrichs do not lead the group, they constantly accompany it and are entirely oriented towards its existential needs. They are 'in synch' with the members of the group.

Because they are likely to share many aspects of their groups' heritage, madrichs are especially well placed to interpret in the Heideggerian sense. They would be aware of many common links and shared significance within

the realms of their groups' historical worlds. Also, as the groups are visiting a destination with at least a partially common heritage, the groups are likely to be familiar with many of the connections the madrich brings to light, which will facilitate interpretation.

Also, because the purposes of such tourism are to educate and develop identity, to understand one's heritage and to develop a sense of connectedness with and responsibility towards one's wider community, the tourists are likely to be open to unfamiliar experiences. The more one is exposed to unfamiliar experiences, the harder it is to 'mindlessly cope' and the more possibilities emerge for interpretations.

It is also worth noting that, although there is a focus on immersing the tourists in Jewish and Israeli life under the guidance of a madrich, overt indoctrination does not seem to be an aim, in contrast to the behaviour of Indonesian tour guides discussed previously. That a madrich leads the group rather than a rabbi or teacher suggests that the role of madrich is not to direct or control tourist experiences or their interpretations of their experiences. This is compatible with encouraging authenticity rather than interfering with it.

The Jewish need for such guides is a reflection of their willingness to explore their identity and of their desire to understand their heritage. Both of these are necessary to cultivate authenticity, so these Israeli tour guides might be seen as facilitators of authenticity because their role is not to stop their tourists thinking for themselves but rather to give them the insights they need to do so. What and how madrichs interpret is not the end of the tourism experience but the beginning of a journey to authenticity.

This approach may serve as a useful model for authentic tour guiding because the motivation for authentic tourism is the same as for local and international tourists in Israel – to discover one's self and to understand the heritage that shapes identity. An approach that aims less for definitive and acceptable interpretation and more for mind-opening insights and questions that encourage tourists to find their own significance in what they experience may just be what authentic tourists are seeking.

Conclusion

It has been argued that the role model madrich is particularly useful in youth tourism and will become more widespread and more in demand, especially in the sectors aimed at students and adolescents who want to discover and explore without being instructed and directed (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). Madrichs seem a useful model for authentic tourism as well. Some tourism has become a search for meaning. There the mentor or mediator style of guiding is important. Guides are no longer pathfinders but rather help tourists find meaning in what they see. Tour guides have had to become more professional, better trained and educated not only in the history, geography and politics of the region where they are guiding but also in sociological and psychological areas, such as motivations or cultural/ethnic backgrounds (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). They must be able to draw knowledge from a number of disciplines other than tourism, such as social psychology of identity, group dynamics or education.

If tour guides were close in age and cultural background to the groups they

lead, if they adopted a role more consistent with companion and resource rather than informant or organiser, and if they encouraged personal engagement with and reflection on the world being experienced rather than telling tourists what their experiences mean and how they should react to them, then madrich-like tour guides could encourage authentic experiences with destinations and sights.

To play this role does not require extensive education and local knowledge. While such a tour guide should know what is needed to keep people safe, they should not necessarily have too many answers. The more answers someone can provide, the less questioning, exploring and reflecting the tourist will become. If tourists have opted for authentic tourism as a quest for personal experience, then the tour guide should have no more to share with a tourist than the kind of knowledge or insights one might gain from a fellow traveller. The role of such a tour guide is not education but lighting the way.

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