



## Book Review

**Philosophies of Hospitality and Tourism: Giving and Receiving, Prokopis A. Christou. Channel View Publications, Bristol (2021). ix + 186pp. ISBN: 978-1-84541-737-6 (hbk); 978-1-84541-736-9 (pbk); 978-1-84541-738-3 (Ebk PDF/EPUB); £99.95, £29.95, £20.00**

The Channel View Publications *Aspects of Tourism* series has established itself as the ‘go to’ list of texts for all of fundamental, specialist and (more occasionally) esoteric commentaries on all the rich varieties of tourism and tourism phenomena. A judicious combination of editorial conventionality and risk-taking has generated some 85 books to date and while no single range of texts can hope to achieve a universally consistent and positive quality, there is much to commend this series.

*Philosophies of Hospitality and Tourism: Giving and Receiving* falls into the specialist/esoteric category (though perhaps it should not) and comprises an Introduction, eight chapters (including various figures, diagrams and photographic illustrations) and (very short) closing remarks. The chapters are organized into three sections – the philosophy of giving in hospitality and tourism (three chapters); the philosophy of receiving in hospitality and tourism (three chapters); and the philosophy of giving and receiving (tourism) places (two chapters). An immediate difficulty for a reviewer presents itself in the absence of any central narrative drive. Chapter 1 (on Philoxena), Chapter 2 on *Agape* and Chapter 3 on philanthropy provide (as do all other chapters) many useful insights but reading them induces the feeling of being the eponymous projectile on a pinball machine. A central problem lies in Chapter 1, subtitled ‘The Concept of Hospitality’ where *reportage* of a restricted selection of the available literature, combined with a failure to take analysis of that literature forward, contributes to the aforementioned lack of narrative coherence which in turn is complemented by a tendency to sketchiness in the introduction and development of concepts.

Thus, in Chapter 4, the first chapter of the book’s second section (‘Receiving experiences: tourist senses and emotions’) there is a short and far from illuminating discussion of the role of human senses in tourism experiences which includes a passing reference to Aristotle on this topic, before a similarly curtailed commentary on hedonism with a similar nod to the idea’s philosophical origins. A limited and inconclusive commentary on nostalgia segues to a discussion of emotions in tourism the impact of which is reduced because it is never quite clear how emotions are being conceived. Chapter 5 is on receiving well-being interpreted in terms of happiness and its role in tourism experiences leading to proposal of a tourism and happiness ‘nexus’. This interesting idea is, however, presented in terms of such vague generalities that its analytic utility is compromised. Chapter 6, on ‘over-receiving’ deals with essentially negative behaviours in tourism – unruliness, gluttony and over-tourism. There is very little here that is explicitly,

conceptually, ‘philosophical’ and given that unruliness is conceived in terms of the carnivalesque it is surprising that there is but one brief reference to the philosophy of Mikhail Bakhtin. Similarly, one might have expected in any discussion of gluttony an allusion to Petronius’ *Satyricon* which, while not strictly a work of philosophy, contains arguably philosophical content of relevance to that topic.

The final part of the book is, as it were, the least philosophical. Chapter 7 is predicated on the concept of topophilia or affection for a place and contains some interesting but rather general insights into the construction of place in tourism. Chapter 8 seeks to explore the interface between spiritual and ‘dark’ tourism with an end note on ‘euthanasia tourism’. Spirituality appears to be the underlying philosophical concept in play but as a concept it remains largely unelaborated.

As a final comment on presentation of content, the book has numerous tables and diagrams a good many of which are hard on the eye because of font size, or because of the use of white type on a grey background. Further, the purpose of some tables/diagrams is not always clear.

An overall evaluation of this work is not easy. That anybody is writing about these issues at all is to be wholly commended, not least because the areas of hospitality and tourism are so very limited in their theoretical development. That said, hospitality is very much the junior partner in the book, and many of the illustrative discussions on specific tourism phenomena draw heavily on the author’s previous research and publications in the field, their overall philosophical relevance often remaining unclear. This returns us to the point made earlier about narrative coherence. In essence this is not so much a text about philosophies of hospitality and tourism but instead a commentary on arguably philosophical *aspects* of those subjects. It is none the worse for that but, given its title, the expectation that there would be rather more philosophical exegesis does not seem unreasonable.

To conclude, *Philosophies of Hospitality and Tourism: Giving and Receiving* is better than a curate’s egg, being good in most parts. The author works hard to maintain interest in the subject and is largely successful. Future revisions might meet the need to strengthen the core message by including an informative introductory overview of how the discipline of philosophy can contribute to our understanding of hospitality and tourism. In the meantime, this book is a valuable, though not invaluable, contribution to an area of inquiry deserving of greater attention.

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