

*A Theory of Tourism**

Hans Magnus Enzensberger

[P] The flame of the sun now shot up ever nearer to the kindled morning clouds; at length, in the heavens, in the brooks and ponds, and in the blossoming cups of dew, a hundred suns arose together, while a thousand colors floated over the earth, and one pure, dazzling white broke from the sky.

[F] We were leaving La Guardia Airport New York, three hours late because of snow storms. Our plane, as usual on this route, was a Super Constellation. Since it was night, I immediately prepared to go to sleep. We spent another forty minutes waiting on the runway with snow in front of the searchlights, powdery snow whirling over the runway . . . the engines were roaring, being revved up one after the other. . . . At last we started.

[P] A second unearthly sun arose in his soul, simultaneously with that in the heavens. In every valley, in every little grove, upon every height, he cast off some of the confining rings of the narrow chrysalis-case of his wintry life and of his grief, and expanded his moist upper and lower wings, and let himself float on the May-breezes with four outspread pinions in the blue sky, beneath lower day-butterflies, and above loftier flowers.

[F] When we had drunk our soup I looked out of the window, although there was nothing to be seen but the flashing green light on our wet wing, the usual shower of sparks and the red glow in the engine cowl. [Later] we were somewhere over the Mississippi, flying at a great height and absolutely smoothly, our propellers flashing in the morning sun; the usual window-panes, you see them and at the same time look through them; the wings also glistening, rigid in empty space, no swaying now,

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we were poised motionless in cloudless sky, a flight like hundreds of others; the engines running smoothly. . . . It was still early morning, I knew this part of the run, I shut my eyes with the intention of going to sleep.

[P] But how powerfully his excited life began to ferment and bubble up within him, when, ascending out of the diamond-pit of a valley full of shadows and drops, he made a few steps beneath the heaven-gate of spring. It seemed as if an almighty earthquake had forced up from the ocean, yet dripping, a new-created blooming plain, stretching out beyond the bounds of vision, with all its young instincts and powers; the fire of earth glowed beneath the roots of the immense hanging garden, and the fire of heaven poured down its flames, and burnt the colors into the mountain-summits and the flowers.

[F] We remained in the desert of Tamaulipas, Mexico, for four days and three nights, 85 hours in all, and there is little to report of this stay. It was not a magnificent experience, as everybody seems to expect when I talk about it. Naturally I thought straightaway of [filming], and got out my camera; but absolutely nothing sensational happened, just an occasional lizard, which made me jump, and some creatures like sand spiders, that was all.

[P] The darling child of the infinite mother, man, alone stood, with bright, joyful eyes, upon the market-place of the living city of the sun, full of brilliancy and noise, and gazed delighted around him into all its countless streets; but his eternal mother rested veiled in immensity; and only by the warmth which went to his heart did he feel that he was lying upon hers.

[F] I've often wondered what people mean when they talk about an experience. I'm a technologist and accustomed to seeing things as they are. I see everything they are talking about very clearly; after all, I'm not blind. I see the moon over the Tamaulipas desert — it is more distinct than at other times, perhaps, but still a calculable mass circling round our planet, an example of gravitation, interesting, but in what way an experience?

[P] When he again went forth, the brilliancy sobered into brightness, his enthusiasm into cheerfulness; every red, floating lady-bird, and every red church-roof, and every flowing stream, which glistened and threw off stars and sparks, cast joyful lights and deep colors upon his soul. When he heard the shouts of the charcoal burners, the resounding of the whips, and the crashing of fallen trees in the loud-breathing and snorting woods, and then again came forth and saw the white chateaux

and roads, which, like constellations of milky-ways, crossed the dark ground of green, and the beaming cloud-flakes in the deep blue, and flashing sparks, now dropping from trees, now shooting upward from the brooks, now gliding over distant saws — then no foggy angle of his soul, no dark corner, was without its sunshine and spring: . . . and his soul could not but chime in with the thousand choral voices which hovered and buzzed around him, and unite in their song — “Beautiful is life, — beautiful is youth — and most beautiful of all is spring!”¹

[F] Why get hysterical? Mountains are mountains, even if in a certain light they may look like something else, but it is the Sierra Madre Oriental, and we are . . . in the Tamaulipas desert, Mexico, about sixty miles from the nearest road, which is unpleasant, but in what way an experience? An aeroplane is an aeroplane, I can’t see it as a dead bird, it is a Super-Constellation with engine trouble, nothing more, and it makes no difference how much the moon shines on it. Why should I experience what isn’t there? Nor can I bring myself to hear something resembling eternity; I don’t hear anything apart from the trickle of sand at every step.²

A century and a half separate the journey from Kuhschnappel to Bayreuth by Firmian Siebenkäs, advocate of the poor, from the travel of Walter Faber, an engineer for UNESCO, from New York to Caracas, Venezuela. The temporal and factual differences between the two texts mark the development of tourism — a thing about which it is difficult to say whether we have created it or whether it has created us.

Both the phenomenon and the word to describe it first appeared when Jean Paul had reached the zenith of his fame. The dictionaries date the first appearance of the word “tourists” 1800, and “tourism,” 1811; as we shall see, it is no coincidence that we owe these neologisms to the English language.

The novel *Homo Faber* by Max Frisch was written in 1957. During the 150 years of its existence tourism has not been able to attract the attention of the historians. Its history has yet to be written. Although it is now common knowledge that history is not made only at the courts, on battlefields, in the cabinets or the general staffs, the system prescribed by court historiographers has largely been adapted to cultural

1. Jean Paul, *Flower, Fruit, and Thorn Pieces or the Married Life, Death, and Wedding of the Advocate of the Poor, Firmian Stanislaus Siebenkäs*, trans. Edward Henry Noll, vol. 2 (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863) 97-99.

2. Max Frisch, *Homo Faber*, trans. Michael Bullock (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1959) 9-26.

and intellectual history, even though the intention was to break with this tradition. Voltaire has taken his place next to Frederick the Great, but like the latter, he serves only as a historical set piece placed in front of reality. We have a history of peoples — but the history of *people* has yet to be written. This is why tourism, as something of the people, still lacks historical self-understanding.

Yet there are few things in our civilization that have been so thoroughly mocked and so diligently criticized as tourism. This critique, however, is blind: its blindest spot lies where it claims to be the most representative, where it articulates itself artistically, and where it adorns itself with the plume of a broken-winged metaphysics:

Occidental tourism is one of the great nihilistic movements, one of the great western epidemics whose malignant effects barely lag behind the epidemics of the Middle and the Far East, surpassing them instead in silent insidiousness. The swarms of these gigantic bacteria, called tourists, have coated the most distinct substances with a uniformly glistening Thomas-Cook-slime, making it impossible to distinguish Cairo from Honolulu, Taormina from Colombo. . . . One has to understand that the Venice of the sight-seeing squirrels belongs with the rubbish heaps of Interlaken and Montreux, which by comparison make the industrial towns of Nottingham and Bochum appear not only solid, but even beautiful. . . . This became most clear to me in the Upper Engadin: this most harmonious fusion of the Mediterranean and the Arctic, where tender larches provide a happy balance of melancholy and cheerfulness, of heroic intensity and proud purity. The air is polluted by the sewer that is St. Moritz, and the eye is insulted by the chain of luxury factories which spread endlessly toward Maloja. [Here] the European disease breaks out in a row of abscesses. A country that has given itself over to tourism conceals its metaphysical substance — it shows its façade but no longer its daemonic power.³

We are not quoting Nebel's critique because of its originality — on the contrary, it is typical of a ubiquitous critique of tourism. It originates with a dyed-in-the-wool tourist. Intellectually, his critique is based on a lack of self-awareness that borders on idiocy; morally, it is "based" on arrogance. It does not help matters to invoke "nihilism," since nobody knows what this really is — a fashionable attribute which fits everything and nothing. A lack of historicity and factual understanding is compensated for by bad metaphysics; matters are mythologized rather than elucidated.

3. Gerhard Nebel, *Unter Kreuzrittern und Partisanen* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1950).

Of course, there is a venerable tradition of confusing the denunciation of tourism with its critique. As early as 1903, a little book by a certain Shand, a passionate tourist, was published in London, entitled *Old-Time Travel: Personal Reminiscences of the Continent Forty Years Ago Compared With Experiences of the Present Day*. One passage reads as follows:

Forty years ago there were cozy hotels but no unruly masses. . . . In those days tourists were comparatively rare, and there were no cheap trippers. . . . The changes in the last fifty years have been marvellous, and the old-time tourist would feel lost and mystified were he landed now at Basle or Geneva. Railways traverse the length and breadth of the land; tunnels are being driven through the bowels of the Alps; lifts have been fitted to the hills wherever a solitary eminence offers commanding points of view; magnificent hotels have been springing up everywhere; rude shelter huts have been turned into commodious inns. . . . The Playground of Europe has been swamped with sightseers, and the sanctuaries where Chaos and Old Night once reigned have been desecrated and vulgarized.⁴

As with Nebel, what poses as criticism turns out to be a reaction in two senses of the word. In social terms, both voices are reactions to a threat to their privileged positions. Implicitly, they both demand that travel be exclusive, reserved for them and their like. They never say exactly what it is that distinguishes them from “sight-seeing-squirrels” or from the “cheap trippers.” The luxury they appropriate without a second thought is considered sinful when consumed by the mob. The technical development of the means of transportation to which tourism owes its existence is condemned; on the other hand, the primitive simplicity of pre-industrial times is idealized — the “old night of chaos” whose “daemonic powers” could be rightfully enjoyed only by the privileged tourists of “the old days.”

This criticism, however, is a reaction not only in sociological terms but also in psychological ones. It is no coincidence that this critique is part of tourism itself from its inception, without having substantially changed its arguments; nor is it a coincidence that its counter-images read like an ad in a travel brochure. While condemning those who succumb to tourism’s attraction, Shand praises the “splendid views” offered by the great peaks, the “playground of Europe” — Switzerland at that time — and the “sanctuaries” whose desecration is always somebody else’s doing. Moreover,

4. Alexander Innes Shand, *Old-Time Travel: Personal Reminiscences of the Continent Forty Years Ago Compared With Experiences of the Present Day* (New York: James Pott, 1904) 5, 138f.

Nebel's lyric effusions with their "tender larches providing a fortunate balance of melancholy and cheerfulness" would fit neatly into any travel brochure. His critique of tourism belongs, in fact, to tourism itself. Its secret ideology: the value ascribed to the "daemonic," the "elementary," the "adventure," the "untouched," — all this is part of tourism's self-advertisement. The disappointment with which the critic reacts to this advertisement corresponds to the deceit that he shares with tourism.

We can gain an understanding of the tourist movement if we unmask its critics, but we cannot gain any profound knowledge this way. If it is true that the phenomenon in question can be situated in the last 150 years, then we must be able to test this thesis with a counter-thesis. Travel is one of the most ancient and common aspects of human life; it can be traced back to mythical times. People have always traveled — hence, how do we justify historically isolating something called tourism from something that has always existed, as if it were something unique?

It was necessity, biological or economic in nature, that made people migrate. The treks of the nomads were due to geographic and climatic causes. The desire to travel never was a reason for ancient expeditions of warfare. The first people who left of their own will were merchants. In ancient Hebrew, the words for "merchant" and "traveler" are synonymous. With one exception — which we will discuss later — travel was a matter for tiny minorities, subject to specific and tangible purposes. It was soldiers and messengers, statesmen and scholars, students and beggars, pilgrims and outlaws whom one found on the roads; but it was, above all, merchants dealing with spices and myrrh, gold and satin, weapons and pearls. Travel, as an end in itself, was unknown until well into the eighteenth century. Odysseus, a mythic embodiment of all travelers that come after him, is called:

the man of many ways . . . who was driven far journeys, after he had sacked Troy's sacred citadel. Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of, many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea. . . . But when in the circling of the years that very year came in which the gods had spun for him the time of his homecoming to Ithaca, not even then was he free of his trials, nor among his own people. But all the gods pitied him. . . . [Anxiously] longing for his wife and his homecoming . . . straining to get sight of the smoke uprising from his own country, he longs to die.⁵

Being away from home means being banished. Traveling is going astray; trials abroad are sheer exile. It will remain so until the days of Robinson Crusoe. The sentimental yearning for far away places is a romantic category. The aura surrounding the heroic period of the voyages of discovery turns out to be an optical illusion. Returning home from his first sailing trip around the world, the Englishman Candish reports:

The Lord was kind enough to let me circle the globe. On this journey I have discovered all places of the worlds known to Christianity or at least gathered information about them. I sailed along the coasts of Chile, Peru, New Spain and found rich booty everywhere. I burnt and sank fourteen sail boats, small and big. I burnt and plundered all villages and cities in which I set foot.⁶

It was only the period following Romanticism that projected its own desires onto the conquistadores and discoverers. The goal of these men was far more practical than the satisfaction of their sentimental longings — they were tools of politics. It was only in hindsight that tourism bestowed upon them the kind of aura that it had bestowed upon itself since its beginnings.

In the course of the eighteenth century, the decidedly purposeful nature of travel began to fade. Even before that, the young cavalier's tour of foreign courts had become part of the aristocrat's education, and travel to a seaside resort had become the norm for the upper classes. At the time, education and recreation began to lose some of their importance as reasons for travel, without, however, becoming a mere pretext. Even today's tourism still reflects these values, although the concept of education has changed completely. The young cavalier set out to discover *le monde* — noblesse and not a canon of cultural monuments. The high esteem enjoyed by such tourist spots like Baden-Baden, Spa, or Aix-les-Bains is reminiscent of the *Bäderreise* [trips to the baths]. As late as 1792, as a devotee of mercantilism and representing the fresh new discipline of national economy, Marperger could in all seriousness suggest introducing a travel tax. In his *Anmerkungen über das Reisen in fremden Ländern* [*Notes on Travel in Foreign Lands*], he argues that travelers were spending all their money abroad — a preoccupation which allows

5. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Richard Lattimore (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 27f.

6. Quoted in Robert Kerr, *Voyages and Travels* (Edinburgh: 1811). My translation of Enzensberger's German rendition of the original — GG.

us to conclude that the volume of travel was beginning to increase.

Yet the concept of travel as pure pleasure was still far away. The most common European travel book then was Reichard's *Guide des Voyageurs*, which makes no reference to the beauty of nature or to other sights. Instead it gives matter-of-fact information about the shortest routes, the mail service, room and board, and bureaucratic requirements — in short, it considers travel a necessary evil. No wonder: after one day on the road, travelers were usually bushed — if they managed to reach their destination at all. Reichard highly recommended carrying loaded guns. His book was published ten years after Schiller's play *The Robbers*. Other guidebooks advised attending a Mass before embarking and another after a safe arrival. In those days, it was not unusual to be ambushed.

Forty years later, the decisive change in travel was accomplished: tourism was born. The Englishman John Murray traveled around the continent gathering material for his bible. It appeared in 1836 and became famous all over the world: the first *Red Book* contained all the sights of Holland, Belgium, and the Rhineland, and recommended to tourists the most picturesque and romantic routes. A prophet of tourism, Murray is also the inventor of the star (*) system, which accorded each sight its value or, as it were, its price-tag. Three years later, Kurt Baedeker's first travel guide for *Die Rheinlande* followed. The new movement had its holy scriptures and was on its way to victory. This triumph was no accident; it was made possible by a very specific historical configuration. For our purposes, it will suffice to enumerate its components. We will leave open the question of which of these components is to be considered the "ultimate cause." Rather, we will describe the historical situation that gave birth to tourism as a set of political, social, technological, and intellectual symptoms with a common revolutionary impetus.

The victory of the bourgeois revolution implanted in each individual a sensation of freedom that had to clash with the very society that produced it. Every revolutionary opening up of a society will be followed by a closure, but it leaves behind a memory that will no longer tolerate restoration — a scar remains in the mind, never to heal completely. Corresponding to the political revolution was a revolution in the mode of production. The new ruling class, the bourgeoisie, organized industrial labor and its world market. The new order created, if not a social, then at least a spatial homogeneity. Technological progress, especially the invention of the steam engine and the steam boat, allowed capitalism to expand the network of traffic necessary for this homogenization of space.

Bearing this in mind, we can now understand the one historical exception mentioned earlier: the Rome of the late Empire. During the last centuries of the Roman Empire, there did indeed exist something like tourism before tourism. In his *Sittengeschichte Roms*, Friedländer notes that the volume of travel in those times was not surpassed in Europe until the early nineteenth century. In those days, Italy's West Coast, from the beaches of Tuscany to the Gulf of Salerno, was a hunting ground for tourists. Villas of marble and luxurious hotels received the guests. Greece, Rhodes, Asia Minor, and Egypt were the preferred sites for vacation. There was regular ferry traffic, travel agencies, money exchange, and festivals; even the interest in museums, often considered a sign of modern tourism, was already in existence.

In some respects early tourism is comparable to modern tourism. To a certain degree, an egalitarian tendency in Roman society had come into its own and was, so to speak, a right of its citizens. Its capitalistic traits are a matter of record. Both the political and the economic situation demanded a homogenization of space across the entire Empire that was achieved through the construction of a grand-scale road network, the traces of which are still recognizable today throughout Europe up to the Limes, the Roman fortification against the barbarians. The revolutionary component, however, is lacking in Roman tourism; it remained a tourism for the few. Neither the political nor the technological motivation sufficed to spread it to the entire population. Most importantly, its intellectual inspiration was less developed than that of modern tourism.

The roots of this modern tourism are found in English, French, and German Romanticism. In their imagery, authors like Gray, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Seume, Eichendorff, Tieck, Wackenroder, Chamisso, and Pückler captured the freedom that was threatening to suffocate under the reality of a beginning world of industrial labor and political restoration. Their imagination both conserved and betrayed the revolution. They transfigured freedom and removed it into a realm of the imagination, until it coagulated into a distant image of a nature far from all civilization, into a folkloric and monumental image of history. This pristine landscape and untouched history have remained the models of tourism. Tourism is thus nothing other than the attempt to realize the dream that Romanticism projected onto the distant and far away. To the degree that bourgeois society closed itself, the bourgeois tried to escape from it — as tourist. Flight from the self-created reality was facilitated by the very means of communication with which

reality had shaped itself. There is more to the feverish enthusiasm with which the English railroads were constructed in the 1830s and 40s than merely the speculative zeal of the capitalists. Railroad mania betrays the ardent desire to escape from the working and living conditions of the industrial revolution. But the network of the railroad system destroyed the very freedom it seemed to create: tourism had thought of the net as a liberation, but knitting this net ever more tightly, society closed in again. Just like the fairy tale in which the tortoise awaits the panting hare, tourism is always outrun by its refutation. This dialectic is the driving force of its very development: far from resigning and giving up the struggle at the cost of freedom, tourism redoubles its efforts after each defeat.

The development of tourism goes hand in hand with industrial civilization; this becomes evident in the advantage English tourists had over those from other nations throughout the nineteenth century. Even before the turn of the century, the English were the travelers par excellence.⁷ Both Keats and Shelley bear witness to their travel mania, as does Byron, whose pioneering efforts make him the archetype of the modern tourist. Today one can still hear the term *lordoi* as a generic term for tourists in rural areas of Greece. Switzerland owes its early reputation as a travel country entirely to the English.

Within the history of tourism, mountaineers play a key role. The birth of alpinism can be dated 1787, when Saussure was the first to climb Mount Blanc. But the golden age of alpinism did not begin until seventy years later, again under the leadership of the English. Almost exactly one hundred years ago, Edward Kennedy — yet another Englishman — founded the Alpine Club, the first organization of mountaineers.

The key role of alpine endeavor consists in the fact that it symbolizes the very concept of the romantic ideology of tourism. It strives for the “elemental,” the “pristine,” the “adventure.” Whatever name one assigns this goal, the dialectic of the process remains the same: once it is achieved, it is destroyed. It is no accident that tourism allies itself with the methods of competitive sports. Since the untouched can be experienced only by touching it, it is important to be the first. Travel becomes a race for the first ascent, for setting the record. Phileas Fogg, the protagonist of Jules Verne’s novel, stakes his honor on traveling around the world in eighty days. The satellites that we put into

7. As Wilhelm Treue notes in his *Kulturgeschichte des Alltags* (München: 1952), supposedly no fewer than 40,000 English traveled to the continent on culture and vacation trips which lasted for months and sometimes even years.

orbit today imitate him by surpassing his achievements.

The discoverers have become tourists too. The romantic aura, in former times endowed only after the discoverers' death, is now bestowed during their lifetime. Just as the alpinist is fascinated by unconquered peaks, so is the explorer by blank spots on the map. Our century has taken it upon itself to see these spots eliminated. Those who take on this task, from Livingstone to Hillary, are celebrated as heroes. The Venetians in the thirteenth century, in contrast, made a mockery of Marco Polo. They did not understand what urged him to make the inaccessible his goal in life; hence they thought he was a swindler. Recently the Russians sent an expedition to the unapproachable pole of the Antarctic, a destination whose sole and completely abstract value lies in the difficulty in reaching it. The pristine has become an ideological mystification. Today even the most strenuous expedition to the most remote points on earth is *a priori* a tourist endeavor; before the first man had been sent into outer space, the first tourists were already inquiring about astronautics.

As the pioneers soon came to realize — often against their own will — their privileged position was only temporary. The society for which they worked was only pursuing its own interests. Those who were singing their praise were, in fact, already hot on their heels. The emancipated citizens endowed them with a prestige that they hoped to capture by repeating the pioneers' achievements: this is what is known as tourism. Soon the freedom that they had found in the rocks of the *Berner Oberland*, the ice of the polar caps, the jungles of the equator was claimed by everybody as a new human right.

The epigones of tourism, however, were not willing to pay the high price for this freedom. Instead, the new human right to distance oneself as far as possible from one's civilization took on the shape of the harmless vacation trip. Yet to this very day tourists insist on the value of the adventure, the elemental, the pristine. The destination has to be both: accessible and inaccessible, distant from civilization and yet comfortable. One travels through the desert in a Pullman coach and experiences the tundra of Lapland in a sleeping car. Nonchalantly, one films the North Pole from the window seat of the Super Constellation. Under *homo faber's* cool gaze, the ardently desired experience evaporates in the heat of the Taumalipas desert.

Of course the new human right, as always, was not a right for all people, but only for the class that invented and developed it: that is, the independent bourgeoisie that lived off its wealth. But once such a right

has been established, it cannot be isolated; on the contrary, it contributes to the intermixing and homogenization of society. There existed and continues to exist a reciprocity between those egalitarian tendencies that paved the way for both the victory and the later demise of the bourgeoisie, and the potential for exchange that came with the new means of transportation. The prerequisites for tourism are at the same time its consequences, and, in turn, its consequences are the prerequisite for its further dissemination — just as electricity and magnetic field enforce each other in an oscillating circuit. Tourism, then, spread from the broader circles of the upper bourgeoisie, first to the civil servants, the craftsmen, and the petit bourgeoisie. There is clearly an exact correlation between the development of the labor force and the development of tourism.

Again, England is in the lead. In July 1841, Thomas Cook, gardener and cabinet-maker, organized the first trip between Loughborough and Leicester for the members of his Teetotalers Club. Four years later he founded a travel agency that in three decades became a world-wide organization. By comparison, the first travel office serving tourism in Germany was not opened until 1863, that is, after more than twenty years delay. It is also telling that Louis Stangen, Berlin, was exclusively serving the so-called “better circles.” The first trip arranged was to Swiss Saxony — but already in the following year his agency offered a guided trip to Egypt and the Holy Land. Cook’s work, on the other hand, was tailored from the very beginning to the needs of a broad petit-bourgeois clientele. In Germany this specific clientele, which would desire travel without purpose or necessity, did not come into being until the end of the century.

Two groups remained excluded from the feverish expansion of tourism: the farmers, who to this very day resist its ideology and practice, and the workers, who ultimately ended up footing the bill. It was not until after World War I that they gained the privilege to escape the increasing pressure of the world of industrial labor, even if only for a few weeks, and even if the escape was only illusory. While entrepreneurs and teachers, civil servants and doctors, craftsmen and businessmen had long recognized the opportunity that tourism provided — to turn their backs on the gloominess of Birmingham and Glasgow, Wuppertal and Bochum — the real victims of the conglomeration of prison-like cities remained chained to the misery of their urban incarceration. Even today in many countries, including England and the United States, there are no federal laws concerning employees’ holidays. It wasn’t until after World War I that the demand for paid holidays

slowly entered the agenda of contract meetings between unions and employers. In 1940, only 25% of American workers enjoyed paid holidays; by 1957, this number had risen to 90%. Federal laws regulate holidays in Germany, France, and Scandinavia.

The struggle for vacation rights was laborious: it lasted for decades. Each partial victory strengthened the desire for a vacation spot. But whenever there was an increase in the rush from the industrial urban areas to the freedom of a vacation spot, there arose a compensatory movement in the opposite direction. In densely populated England, places like Brighton or the notorious Blackpool became synonymous with inundations of tourists. Even before World War II, tourists in search of relaxation were more tightly packed together than slum residents, and the vacation trains were more packed than the subways during rush hour.

Tourism had long proven to be a Pyrrhic victory: the yearning for freedom from society has been harnessed by the very society it seeks to escape. An industry has been established to manufacture deliverance from the industrial world; travel beyond the world of commodities has itself become a commodity. If a critic like Gerhard Nebel touts the beauty of Nottingham and Bochum over and against the rubbish heaps of Interlaken and Montreux, he is only trying to banish a phenomenon of the world of labor by means of its complement. The opposition, however, is fictitious. One may just as well deride a steel plant by comparing it to a coal mine.

The progress of tourism, which is at the same time the progress of its cultural predominance, can be illustrated by three of its achievements, each of which is indispensable for the development of any industry on a grand scale: standardization, packaging, and serial production.

The standardization of travel destinations began with the invention of the travel book. Murray's *Red Book* of 1836 guides the stream of tourists into pre-established channels. At the outset, the traveler voluntarily submits to this steering. The conditioning exercised by these books is psychological, not yet physical. The basic standardized element is the sight,⁸ the point of interest [*Sehenswürdigkeit*]; according to its value, it is classified with one, two, or three stars.

The concept of the "sight" is of decisive importance to the tourist and thus warrants close analysis. First of all, it indicates that the tourist is not without a guilty conscience. The purposelessness of the trip, which is supposed to guarantee the freedom for which the traveler longs, is belied. For the sight is not merely worth visiting; it authoritatively

8. English in the original — GG.

demands it. A sight is something that one is expected to see. Fulfilling this duty delivers the tourist from the guilt that is implicitly recognized in taking flight from society. Through obedience the tourist discloses the inability to endure the freedom that s/he ostensibly desires.

The material packaged as a sight consists of images of the far away — Romanticism's version of history and nature. These images are compressed into a botanical garden, a zoo, a museum. The names representing the central institutions and thoughts of the nineteenth century are interchangeable. While tourists, following the handbook, experience ancient Rome as a historical zoo where they can look into the eye of the beast of history without danger or punishment, the landscape will turn into an object of museum-like observation, following the logic of the double star that prescriptively adorns it. Nowadays a travel agency will arrange buffalo hunts in Africa, tiger shikars in India, and elk hunts in Lapland. A professor of zoology will explain the natural *sights* on a photo-safari to the Etosha Salt Flats; Watusis and negroes with lip plates dance to the commentary of a leading ethnologist in front of the 24 participants of an Africa trip, while the audience listens just as devoutly as a hurriedly flown-in group of college girls listens to an art history professor in Florence's Uffizi. Today, the demand for sights exceeds the supply. While the last century still adhered to the sights provided by museums and zoos, our century produces its own synthetic sights on demand. From a festival to an imitation of a Lappish tent — anything that will attract tourists will be manufactured for them.

The sight finally comes full circle in the abstraction that makes it into the absolute tourist experience far from all foreign contingencies. In northern Kansas, not far from Highway 281, there is a well-kept grove planted around a stone. Written on the stone is: "This is the geographical center of the United States." The road leading to this stone was built exclusively to get there; it is crowded with tourists whose visit entails paying their respect to this stone.

These standardized elements, however, do not themselves suffice. They still have to be assembled. This step is represented by the ticket voucher. This idea also originated in 1868 in the brain of the incredible Thomas Cook. His company threaded the sights together into an itinerary for the tourist and guaranteed the acceptance of the vouchers, which, in turn, justified the tourist's following the route. Henceforth, everything was included in the deal; the trip was delivered as assembled and packaged. Adventure had become something pre-arranged, with all risks eliminated.

But even this standardized and assembled product did not satisfy the new industry. As long as every piece had to be processed individually, the product was still too expensive. Like any consumer good, travel had to be manufactured in large quantities if the tourist industry wanted to maintain its position in the market. But maintenance meant expansion. Tourism crowned its victory — the defeat of its human sense — by inventing the guided tour. Who else but the good Thomas Cook could succeed in doing this? He had no idea what he was starting! He dedicated to tourism the missionary zeal with which he had previously exorcised demon alcohol. His upright morals perceived no contradiction between the Good and good business. In 1845 he organized the first guided tour for tourist pleasure. It was like a victory parade; Cook had planned everything fastidiously. He had visited all the stopovers of the tour in advance. A hotel room stood ready for each traveler. A printed program instructed participants on how to enjoy themselves properly. Drum rolls and cannon salutes welcomed them on their arrival. The innovation of the guided tour had completed the production methods of the tourist industry. Mass production had begun, and there was no holding it back. By the 1870s, the first guided trip around the world was setting out

Originally conceived as something that redeemed its followers from society, tourism now brought society along. On the trip, the participants were able to read in the faces of their neighbors what they had intended to forget. Traveling companions were a reflection of what one had left behind. Ever since, tourism has been the mirror image of the society it is trying to escape.

In this mirror image, we can unmistakably recognize the transition from classic capitalism to late capitalism, and from there to a totalitarian society. The pristine is “developed” by capitalism and “subordinated” by totalitarian means. Military analogies come to mind. Tourism is a parody of total mobilization. Its headquarters resemble the facilities where the movement of troops is being planned. While the tour book of the good old days remained a humble servant, today’s guide wears the demeanor of a boss whose command is no less official merely because the commandee is paying for it. The person guiding the tour assumes the demeanor of the commander of a regiment; the crew craves and fears his authority in equal measure. Without warning, the *Kraft-durch-Freude* [strength through Joy] trip turns into a crammed deportation: behind the summer camp loom the watch towers of those

other camps that have come to symbolize our era.

The revolutionary impulse that has elevated tourism into a world-wide phenomenon was too blind to understand its own dialectic, and too powerful to come to terms with its inevitable demise. Time and again tourism angrily attempts to escape the vicious circle of its inner logic and its confinement. And it fails every time.

The German Youth Movement of the beginning of the twentieth century is maybe the most characteristic of these attempts. Protesting not only against the adult world but also against the tourism that it provided for its own apparent escape, these youths resolutely dispensed with comfort and set out with backpack, camping equipment, and tent. They programmatically eliminated technological means of travel; instead, they artificially reconstructed the harsh conditions of "genuine" adventure. As if nothing had happened since Romanticism, they faithfully accepted or re-adopted the romantic concept of freedom, and once again camouflaged this romantic idea by a mere geometric multiplication of tourism's flight from the façade of tourism. As no more than a façade, however, the Youth Movement's freedom was easily assimilated into fascist designs. The alleged independence of Hitler Youth excursions was already following the very logic which would later send its participants to Stalingrad and Siberia.

Yet another critical sally against the perversion of tourism, the camping movement, has been a light-hearted protest, harmless in its failure. In its ideological masquerade, however, it resembles the Youth Movement because it also relies on the catchwords of "love of nature," "escape from civilization," and "independence." But the campers subjected themselves to these catchwords — conveniently provided by the manufacturers of camping products — with the callous resignation that has become the customary response to advertising slogans. With its policed camping regulations, obligatory use of campgrounds, camp order and campground host, its running water and outlet for the electric shaver, the camping movement quickly became absurd. Today, so they say, it is already out of style. Instead, one resides in bungalow communes — which does nothing to alter the dubious nature of the matter.

A serious attempt to overcome the limits of sight-seeing tourism is being made by some clever promoters and tourists who replace sight-seeing with *lifeseeing*: observing the way the people one visits really live is becoming the latest interest of tourists. The commercial aspect of this promising idea turns the lack of hotels — a consequence brought about by the excess of tourists — into an advantage. Instead,

one now lives in private homes and participates in the everyday lives of the hosts. This supposedly reinstates the old virtue of hospitality. True to the dialectics of tourism, though, this attempt produces its own shortcomings as well. The virtue thus conjured is destroyed by its appropriation. As long as travel was an odyssey or an exile, hospitality was considered an asylum; once it becomes a deliberate amusement, the doors are closed. Up went the cathedrals of tourism: the hotels.

The history of tourism is also a history of hotels. The primitive shelter of the Middle Ages and the modest utility of old carriage houses were insufficient for the movement. The architectural monuments it created overshadowed everything previously placed at the disposal of visiting foreigners. The first modern hotel was the Badische Hof, built in Baden-Baden during the first years of the nineteenth century. There, a complex hierarchy of managers, porters, *maitres d'hôtel*, waiters, elevator boys, bellhops, maids, and house servants operated within the large apparatus of halls, ballrooms, dining areas, libraries, bedrooms and baths, horse stables, terraces, and winter gardens. Today the Badische Hof still sets a standard; following its model, railway hotels replaced the old guest houses of the coach stops. As tourism progressed under the sway of high capitalism, the hotel industry increasingly made use of this form of economic organization. In 1850 the Grand Hotel was opened in Paris, the first enterprise of its kind in the legal form of a limited company. The increasing concentration of capital led to the establishment of the first hotel trust, the Ritz franchise, as early as 1880. Around the turn of the century the first mammoth hotels with more than 500 rooms were being built in the United States.

This did not change the old façade of the hotels modelled after Baden-Baden, a telling façade in respect to tourism's psychology. The hotel is the castle of the upper bourgeoisie. Here this new class ostentatiously usurps the life-style of the aristocracy in a milieu of unexcelled luxury. While the true aristocrat, just like the farmer, has an aversion to travel for the sake of traveling, the bourgeois upstart displays as traveler what is denied at home. The tourists have the illusion of escaping not only into the freedom of a historic or geographical distance but also into a life-style they consider to be of higher social status. Not only do they search for history as museum, and for nature as botanical garden — they also seek to remove themselves from society through the image of "high living."

Social prestige joins the sight as the motive for traveling. Travel pretends to be a relief from the world of commodities, but ironically it is

precisely the trademark of a trip that plays the decisive role in calculating its price. Just as the brand name raises or even virtually constitutes the price of a perfume, so does the name of a trip's destination determine its price. The aura with which the Romantics invested the widely traveled person petrifies into a trademark representing the fetish of the tour — a trait perfectly embodied in the fetish of the souvenir. A metal plate on the walking stick, a tag on the suitcase, a sticker on the car, a certificate of having crossed the Equator or the North Pole, the souvenir insures the tourists against doubting their own experience, as did Walter Faber, and provides a piece of evidence for their return.

The last stage of the tourist endeavor is the return, which turns the tourists themselves into the attraction. It is not enough to experience what ideology has sold as the pristine far away — one also has to publicize it. Those who stayed at home demand that the adventures be recounted. This bragging comprises, and at the same time destroys, an ancient convention of all traveling, dating back to the times when the word of the traveler was the only source of information about other places. Today's tourists, however, only proclaim what everybody already knows. Their report serves to bolster not only the image of the tourist but also that of the organizers of the trip to whom they had entrusted themselves. Tourism is that industry whose production is identical to its advertisement: its consumers are at the same time its employees. The colorful pictures taken by the tourists differ only in their arrangement from the picture postcards that they purchase and send. These postcards are the travel itself on which the tourists set out. The world they encounter is the familiar world known beforehand from reproductions. They only consume the second-hand, confirming the advertisement poster that enticed them in the first place.

The true effort demanded of the tourist lies in confirming the make-believe as the authentic — to be sure, no small accomplishment. To ease the burden of boredom accompanying traveling, Tauchnitz, a publisher from Leipzig, came up with the travel-reader as a palliative. An anthology of English texts served tourists from across the Channel who still dominated the tourist movement; in turn, the grateful English travelers rewarded him with considerable wealth and the title of "baron." There was still no remedy, however, for tourism's clandestine disappointment and the despair of the voyeur.

Despair is a familiar experience for tourists. Blindly, they grasp for the strongest means to dissipate boredom, well aware beforehand of the futility of their escape. Again and again they see through a deceptive freedom

that is sold ready-made, but refuse to admit the betrayal that has victimized them. They do not voice their disappointment because the blame would fall not on the organizers of the trip but only on themselves. In the eyes of their friends, such a confession of defeat would amount to a social failure. Once deceived, the tourists do not want to add insult to their injury. They run the risk of earning the same contempt from their acquaintances that they already meet with from reactionary cultural critics.

It is indeed very easy nowadays to make fun of mass tourism in the manner of Gerhard Nebel. The force, however, that drives vacationers to the beaches of their little holiday happiness is immense. It is the force of a blind and inarticulate rebellion, doomed to go under in the surf of its dialectics. The fact that only bus companies and *hoteliers* take this force seriously amounts to an annihilating indictment of our political state of affairs. The flood of tourism is, in fact, nothing but a gigantic escape from the kind of reality with which our society surrounds us. This escape, no matter how inane or helpless it may be, criticizes that from which it withdraws.

The desire that informs this stubborn, fierce, and futile critique cannot be repressed, but it can be exploited. Since the tourists do not understand the logic of this desire, exploitation can easily pervert it, time and again. To mock tourism neither explains nor impedes this phenomenon. Tourism is based on the desire for the pursuit of happiness. Even in the throngs of Ibiza or Capri, it shows its unbroken vitality. The images of happiness created by Romanticism will endure, proof against any forgery, as long as we are unable to confront them with our own images. They even triumph over the posters into which capital, the medusa, has magically transformed them. They testify against us, not for us. In their faces truth flickers like a recollection which cannot fade away because we remain content with it. A posthumous aphorism by Otto Weininger says that one can never travel into freedom from a train station. This statement will hold true as long as we believe what we read in the newspaper that is forwarded to our vacation spot. Tourism shows that we have grown accustomed to accepting freedom as mass deceit, a mass deceit that enjoys our confidence although we have already seen through it. As we point to the return ticket in our pockets, we are admitting that freedom is not our goal and that indeed we have already forgotten what freedom is.

Translated by Gerd Gemünden and Kenn Johnson