

REZENSIONEN / BOOK REVIEWS

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Review of: Ben-Aharon, Y. (2011) *The Event in Science, History, Philosophy and Art*. VBW Publishing.

In a conversation between Foucault and Deleuze in 1975, Deleuze, by reference to Proust, affirms all his writing as *tools*; “It must be useful. It must function. And not for itself.”¹ To write a book is to create a toolbox for transformation, for change and for combat, Deleuze says. This is a very relevant point when it comes to Ben-Aharon’s 2011 publication *The Event in Science, History, Philosophy & Art*. It is structured in four parts, each focusing around the discoveries and creations that the 20th century has brought in each of the four areas. It seems to us that some of the unique characteristics of this book is the combination of it as a map, or a time-picture of the 20th century, as well as tools for transformation that *emerge* from such a broad overview. In other words, what Ben-Aharon is able to do, is to use his fully individualized anthroposophical method (this was presented in his 1995 *The New Experience of the Supersensible*²) and find elements in contemporary culture that through his creative synthesis together compose a fully updated language and picture of the metamorphosis and becoming of man.

The first chapter on ‘The Event in Science’ is composed to give the reader a contemporary picture of how this new language develops along a renewed forefront of contemporary mainstream science. Already coined in 1983 by the Noble Prize winner

in chemistry Ilya Prigogine, it is the shift ‘*from Being to Becoming*’. A new synthesis is emerging between chemistry and biology, genetics and theory of evolution, neurology and the cognitive sciences where a picture of the human as a growing edge of cosmic evolution is emerging. It is an image to feel more at home with, and also challenged by, as creative human being. And most importantly, it can support and be supported by contemporary history and philosophy (as presented in chapter 2 & 3) – and hence bridge the gap between science and the humanities. A life science coming alive becomes a human science.

In chapter two the story of human individuation (Burkhardt 2012) is taken one step further, now into history; i.e. our Western cultural biography. What is the relation between the history of ideas and the history of their realization in social reality? Through a very original and precise concept of ‘reversal’, Ben-Aharon discovers a new social law that applies to this particular field of relations. It is the law of how every new social idea (as for example the ideas of the French revolution; freedom, liberty and “brotherhood” or solidarity) through the process of appropriation is captured into exact opposite actualizations. Looking back at social tragedies of the 19th and 20th cultural history (nazism, communism, commercialism or capitalism) there is no moral excuse for these reversals. There is however a relief, when we understand that the social tragedies appear as a result of the same process that has given our sense of self its cultural momentum and gravity. The moment we understand this historical law of reversal as unavoidable is the moment we see the possibility of its re-reversal. Ben-Aharon’s point is that we can understand the wound by going *into* it, and that this is also the path to resurrect culturally – in and through the same wounds. When we see that the genesis of these social sufferings are connected to one and the same law of reversal, we are lead to the question of a possible cure or healing impulse. The philosophical and epistemological counter-force Ben Aharon spots is the wound-seekers of 20th century philosophy: the great transformers of 20th century instrumental knowing.

1. Michel Foucault, «Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze», in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 205–2017.

2. Jesaiah (Yeshayahu) Ben-Aharon, *The New Experience of the Supersensible: The Anthroposophical Knowledge Drama of Our Time* (London: Temple Lodge Publishing, 1995).

In the third chapter 'The Event in Philosophy' five philosophical authorships are brought together to compose that healing counterforce, which includes diverse and very disparate elements. The five are Gilles Deleuze together with Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou and Emmanuel Levinas. Each of these thinkers bring fuel that will help to transform thinking and, as Ben-Aharon quotes Deleuze/Guattari on, make philosophy reach its sole purpose; to be worthy of the event. The five thinkers together compose a double movement of *virtualization of thinking*, which releases it from the body and its psychological habits, and a re-entry into the world of actualities where the encounter with the other takes place in an enhanced consciousness. The central tool that the chapter explains is the process of de-actualization, virtual actualization and re-actualization. These concepts are taken from Deleuze and Deleuze/Guattari's writings, and are explained as a process that can be said to be a conscious excarnation and incarnation of thinking. One of the significant aspects of the book is that this process as a whole is said to create *a new body*. Here Ben-Aharon takes what Deleuze/Guattari calls a Body without Organs (BwO) and uses this concept as designating a new human-cosmic creation. This is what enables a conscious exploration of life itself in its virtual state, but also what secures a safe connection with and re-entry into the physical world of actualities. Ben-Aharon presents this process without too much quotation from the works by Deleuze/Guattari, thus giving the reader the task of translation between the texts. This is in itself a rewarding experience, and anyone who will study for example the books *What is Philosophy?* or the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, will find very interesting material for such a comparative study. This should be of utmost interest both to those who are well versed in Deleuze/Guattari as well as those who have read the philosophical and spiritual scientific works by Rudolf Steiner.

We cannot go through all the philosophers that Ben-Aharon deals with, but in addition to Foucault and Derrida who in the book are presented mainly as contributing to the spiritualization of thinking, Badiou and Levinas are two thinkers who bring the necessary counterbalance in their focus of the encounter with the Other. If Badiou is the one who reminds us of the necessary split in us between our human-animal nature, and the *subject of truth* that this ordinary person must be penetrated by and

then remain faithful to by directing daily goals and habits towards supporting this truth, then Levinas helps to think the encounter with the Other as the most fundamental constitutive event of our being. In this way the event in philosophy is balanced both cognitively and morally: the more cosmic we become, the deeper we penetrate into social life and the earth.

If the chapter on philosophy helps us to grasp the process of transformation of thinking and consciousness by means of contemporary thinkers and the inspiration that they embody, then the chapter on art brings this one step further into concretizing the creation of a virtual body, a BwO. In 'The Event in Art' seven stages of artistic becoming are depicted. These are Ben-Aharon's own creations, but in each of them he applies statements and works by artists who reflect the different intensive levels of artistic becoming. The first stage presents the problem of creating a Threshold Identity, which has to do with the mutual and reciprocal shifting between activity and receptivity, between artistic will and the given material, and the problem of self-consciousness related to this. From this all-important discovery, the artistic process is deepened. The question of an articulation or expression that will support and induce such a Threshold Identity is brought forth in the next stage; Initiation Language. This new language is sourced in a remembering (not-forgetting) of threshold identity through the act of expressing. For each new stage, which does not follow in linear fashion but belong together in a non-organic wholeness, a more hidden aspect of the creative process is revealed. Together this intensification of conscious creativity will contribute with what Ben-Aharon calls a virtual heart and blood organ. The artist offers his or her forces of life and attention in the process of creating a work of art, but is at the same time infused by cosmic inspiration. In such an exchange, which belongs to the fourth stage called *Vortex (Metamorphosis)*, a mutual reversal of life and death in and through each other takes place. The individual grows into the cosmic and vice versa. In this way the artistic process continues, but also builds on the foundation that the philosophical transformation of thinking has laid. The last stage of artistic becoming is called *History (Resurrection)*, and leads back to the beginning. Here it is reflected how the whole process, both the artistic process per se, and the whole project of giving expression to the Event, is one which weaves together life and death.

Through the chapter on art, Ben-Aharon shows how cosmic life and human life is exchanged in a mutual life-death and resurrection process, and it is through such a realization that a new virtual body will be created. In this way *The Event in Science, History, Philosophy & Art* can be seen as a preparation for the next book that Ben-Aharon has announced, and which will go into detail on the creation of a new virtual body.

This summer both a German and Spanish translation of the book has been published, making Ben-Aharon's research available also for German and Spanish readers. An interesting question to raise is how Ben-Aharon's book relates to and extends Herbert Witzgenmann's phenomenology of cognition in his 'Strukturphänomenologie' (Witzgenmann 1983). In any case, there is now a vast field of work to be done in connecting new anthroposophical research with new developments in science, philosophy and art. For this purpose, the way consciousness studies and phenomenology of becoming is linked to art and science in Ben Aharon's work, creates a new canvas; not a space of representation but a space of performance where renewal of science implies renewal of history.

We hope his book will be received and eagerly studied as an important element in creating this new beginning.

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