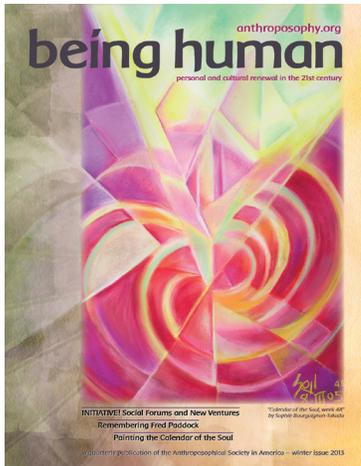


INITIATIVE!



The Event & The Global Event College

by Paul Zachos

Since the 1930's and more forcefully since the middle of the 20th century, a highly creative force has been streaming into human becoming. I have variously referred to this in-streaming force both here and in my other books as "the Event" of our age. The same can be characterized also as an influx, that introduces into our being as a whole, and also specifically into thinking, a new creative impulse and force. It is a power of growth, transformation, metamorphosis, in short a powerful impulsion that on the one hand destabilizes and shatters existing structures, and on the other enables wholly new horizons of creativity.

The Event in Science, History, Philosophy, and Art, p.143

The *Global Event College* was formed as a collaborative endeavor to reveal pathways of human development on which new educational foundations may be built. The College is a gathering of individuals inspired by Dr. Yeshayahu Ben-Aharon's investigations into the great transforming event of our time, which he refers as *the event of human becoming*, *the event of the 21st century* or simply as *the Event*. The fruit of Ben-Aharon's research is reported in his book, *The Event in Science, History, Philosophy and Art*.

Members of the Global Event College work closely with Dr. Ben-Aharon, pursuing their own research into the Event and its implications. Their work spans and often integrates several disciplines (e.g., medicine, education, literature, music, philosophy, social activism, cognitive science). Until now they have shared their work in their circle of friends and colleagues. In 2013 the College will begin to share its work with the public at large.

About "the Event"

The magnitude and significance of the Event has not been lost to the great thinkers of our time. Late-20th century philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari declared that, "Philosophy's sole aim is to become worthy of the event..." (*What is Philosophy*, p.160). Author and inventor Ray Kurzweil has delved deeply into this great transforma-

Since the 1930s a highly creative force has been streaming into human becoming: "the Event"

INITIATIVE!

Technological change will be so rapid that human life will be irreversibly transformed.

tion with insight and effectiveness, and he is able to take deep looks into the future based on his findings. Kurzweil refers to this great transformative event as The Singularity:

What then, is the singularity? It's a future period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed.

The Singularity is Near, 2005, p. 7

Kurzweil directs our attention to the law of accelerating returns (the discovery that the rate of acceleration of technological progress is itself accelerating) and tells us that:

Within several decades information-based technologies will encompass all human knowledge and proficiency, ultimately including the pattern-recognition powers, problem-solving skills, and emotional and moral intelligence of the human brain itself. (*Ibid.* p. 8)

By the end of this century the non-biological portion of our intelligence will be trillions of trillions of times more powerful than unaided human intelligence (p. 9).

Extrapolating from the explosive growth of technology, and particularly that of information technology, Kurzweil predicts that we will soon be able to “reverse engineer [i.e., decode] the human brain’s principles of operation.” This will allow us to transfer our consciousness to machine bodies and in this way to transcend the limitations of our biological origins (disease, injuries, aging, suffering, death). Interfaces with machine intelligence would give unprecedented speed and power to human intelligence.

The law of accelerating returns will continue until non-biological intelligence comes close to “saturating” the matter and energy in our vicinity of the universe with our human-machine intelligence. By saturating, I mean utilizing the matter and energy patterns for computation to an optimal degree, based on our understanding of the physics of computation. As we approach this limit, the intelligence of our civilization will continue its expansion in capability by spreading outward toward the rest of the universe. The speed of this expansion will quickly achieve the maximum speed at which information can travel. Ultimately, the entire universe will become saturated with our intelligence. This is the destiny of the universe. We will determine our own fate rather than have it determined by the current “dumb,” simple, machinelike forces that rule celestial mechanics. (p. 29)

Kurzweil’s project has been taken up in earnest by the *Singularity University*, to my knowledge the only institution of its kind, aside from the Global Event College, that is devoted entirely to the study and actualization of the event of our time. While the Singularity University is focused on the mastery of the material universe, it recognizes at the same time the priority of information over matter. This is already a profound spiritual recognition. The principal players of the Singularity University have directed their efforts to riding (and indeed to intensifying) the wave emerging from the operation of the law of accelerating returns and to bringing humanity to a state bordering on immortality, omniscience, and omnipotence in its relationship to the natural world.

While acknowledging the impressiveness of the outcomes associated with this evolutionary trend, Ben-Aharon offers a perspective on the underlying phenomenon that is quite the reverse of Kurzweil’s. Ben-Aharon recognizes that science and technology are indeed working creatively with the formative forces that underlie physical matter and life, moreover that the next phase of humanity’s evolution will require freedom from biological determination. But what if the technological “explosion” is only the symptom or effect of a much greater event—rather than its cause? Contemporary innovations in the sciences, philosophy, and the arts give evidence of profound transformations in human consciousness for which technological innovation is an insufficient explanation. These changes herald a future in which humanity can become an active co-worker in the creative forces underlying historical and even biological evolution. We need not feel constrained to follow Kurzweil’s indication that our destiny lies in the transfer of our consciousness into more durable and efficient information processing devices. Describing the salient features of the Event, Ben-Aharon offers:

This “creative impulse” causes powerful organic-psychological and cognitive transformation of the human being as we know it. It accelerates and intensifies an already operating and advancing separation process between the physical body and its organic life- and formative-forces. This separation is felt strongly by creative people... It was a profound source of human creativity in the 20th century and is turning into something even more potent in this century.

The Event, p. 143

What if the technological explosion is only the symptom or effect of a much greater event?

The Global Event College, inspired by Ben-Aharon’s

We seek moral and cognitive capacities to go beyond subjectivity and organic bodily processes

insights concerning the Event, directs its attention to taking advantage of the opportunity that arises from this separation process to develop enhanced cognition and the exercise of moral imagination which will provide the basis for the coming round of human development. Instead of the path of transferring our accumulated memories into more durable electromagnetic processors, we seek to employ our moral and cognitive capacities to go beyond the limitations of subjectivity and organic bodily processes. Perhaps the Singu-

larity is already here!

The Reversal

An additional problem must be faced by modern consciousness if human development is not to take a disastrous direction. This has precisely to do with the question of why, in the face of exponential growth of technology and scientific knowledge, we do not see corresponding progress in humanity's social and moral accomplishments.

Through his research Ben-Aharon has uncovered a cognitive social phenomenon that he refers to as *the modern reversal* and also as *the ur-phenomenon of modern history*. It is just this, that:

The more humans become individualized, the more they desire to universalize...The human individuality feels and experiences herself as a universal human being precisely by dint of experiencing herself as a private personality... This amounts to an appropriation, individuation and privatization of the universal by turning it into a personal private possession. (*Ibid.* p. 83-84)

Thus even though our actions may be driven by our highest (universal) ideals, we find ourselves, when applying them to the social and natural environments, committing "inhuman" deeds towards our neighbors and our environment as we attempt to bring our desires to realization.

A private ego that controls the forces of God, Nature or Idea, makes them its own, and uses them for its personal priorities in social life and nature. (*Ibid.* p. 84)

In his introduction to the lecture series published as

The Boundaries of Natural Science, Saul Bellow calls our attention to the fact that Rudolf Steiner's work was directed to building a connection between natural science and social life. Similarly Ben-Aharon's unique examination of science, history, philosophy, and art in his book on the Event is directed to a renewal of social life. The Global Event College aims to realize this same goal.

Several years back, Yeshayahu Ben-Aharon made a statement, simple, even mathematical in its clarity. Pointing to a necessary foundation for the renewal of social life he proposed:

I meet myself
I meet you
True revolution!

Grounded in the deep seriousness of these insights, the Global Event College works to elaborate theory and practice for the emerging arts and sciences of a truly human becoming. Putting the phenomenon of technological acceleration and mastery of matter into proper perspective, we seek not an escape from the frailties of physicality, nor the promise of a fantastic ride on the vehicle of simulated realities. Rather we seek to become true students of the origin, progress, and destiny of the universe, and conscious and intentional collaborators with its creative forces in the framework of a worthy social existence.

To elaborate theory and practice for the emerging arts and sciences of a truly human becoming.

The Global Event College will make its debut public presentation at Forum Drei in Stuttgart, Germany, at the end of October 2013. The Event in Science, History, Philosophy, and Art is available at Amazon.com in paper and Kindle versions.

Paul Zachos is the Director of the Association for the Cooperative Advancement of Science and Education (ACASE) located in Saratoga Springs, NY. He has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and Statistics. ACASE works to foster creativity in educational settings and to provide constructive alternatives to destructive testing practices in schools.