



NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
FACULTY OF FINE ART; DEPARTMENT OF PAINTING

IDEAL OF FREEDOM:
A Consideration of the Work of Joseph Beuys

By

George Roberts

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design
and Complementary studies in Candidacy for
the Degree of B.A. (Fine Art) 1995-1996

I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Dr. Laura Jackson Gale in editing the typescript.

Chapter I	Theory of Social Sculpture - Critique of Beuys as Consumer-Leader Beuys' Personal Mythology - Placing Beuys in art-historical perspective
Chapter II	Beuys' Spiritual Journey - Influence of Rudolf Steiner
Chapter III	Material, Tools - Interdisciplinary Involvement Consideration of Individual Works. Beuys' Philosophy: Christianity, and Concept of Death: Ideal of Freedom considered
Chapter IV	Further consideration of Philosophy - Christianity, Shamanism
Chapter V	Consideration of Occultism
Chapter VI	Conclusion: Position of Artist in Late 20th Century

CHAPTER I

Beuys' theory of social sculpture, proclaiming everyone as artist, meant not that everyone should paint or sculpt - though this would be ideal or at least therapeutic - but that all people could become attuned to the cultural dimensions of everything they did. Then the evolving of culture would be as social cement in the world, since everyone possesses creative facilities which must be identified and developed - an aestheticisation of labour would result. There would be an organization of energy/forms linking to desired social objectives through reciprocity between individuals in the first instances, and thus, following, better communications between communities, banded together for social amelioration through artistic involvement.

Jean Paul Sartre's claim¹ that the discovery of bad faith in each human being, founded upon an awareness of an exteriority of each individual - that is, one may take oneself to be a farmer, an artist, a miner, etc. only insofar as those who have cognisance of one's individual existence accepting these definitions for themselves - these antimonies might then be reconciled. The interrelating of individual freedoms and identities might then be subsumed through recognition of individual responsibilities in correlation with the common good.

Beuys considered himself healer - teacher - shaman, as a timeless incarnation of the archetypical artist in a Romantic/Expressionist sense, seeing that art in its illuminative function, as revelation, is essentially unchanged since the beginning of cultural time - the artist as nature, or its mediator. While acting as a manifestation of this essentially solitary role, Beuys disagreed with blatant specialization and divergence between social disciplines, such as religion, medicine, art, etc. but was still able to attempt to be a unifying force and contemplate the political complexity which exists when knowledge of matters artistic and political become so large that they begin to specialise and must exchange across disciplinary boundaries. In a pejorative

sense this could make him seem to play the role of the artist as ahistorically transcendental consumer - leader, a kind of fundamentalist, and his aim of unified, unalienable existence as an attempt to universalize and reify the function of the artist as omnipotent, all-feeling expresser: that what Beuys, meretriciously, in some views, called the artist would be merely a universal template for fitting individuals into a totalitarian Beuysian culture identity, allowing them no awareness of the scale of the predicament that existence constitutes. Beuys may have been seen to try to tell all his followers - anyone who would behold him uncritically - of all that has ever happened, promising relief from the striving which is the meaning of the future beneath the shield of the drive for self-preservation, considering himself a Messiah, and promulgating what some of his fellow academics at the Dusseldorf Art College termed his Jesus-kitsch (fakery), in his struggle to improve what he considered to be the impoverished spiritual life of the world in the twentieth century.

For Beuys' detractors, the incident - which he may have embellished, not to say mythologised - of his World War II trauma of being shot down in the Crimea and saved by nomadic tribesmen, provides what they consider an indulgent, self-gloryfying fabrication. They think that having caught Beuys in an outright lie, they have invalidated his work as an artist, which, like him, is a fraud that has to be exposed. They are blind to the irony of his personal life where he does not present himself as the mythical hero they imagine he pretends to be, vulnerable rather than strong, victim rather than vanquisher, in need of strangers to save him, rather than the self-reliant leader of his people. They accuse him of so-called primitivism because creativity is incomprehensible to them, since for them, ideology has priority over creativity.

Personal mythologising is a way of dealing with personal disasters that befall, and as such, cannot be outrightly condemned as it is necessary for psychological survival, though one of its unfortunate side-effects in that it compels

the individual to actions that meet its demands: but this does not lead to a blind repetition of the disaster, if one engages it voluntarily rather than submitting compulsively. In a way, Beuy's wish to heal others was the beginning of the end of his own wartime traumas, in that it lifted him out of a pathological isolation. Thus he relived his suffering through his work, but also remembered, accepted and tried to understand it, which meant that he realised that it was not unique to him: so, it may be postulated that artistic action reveals the communal character of individual suffering, making it part of collective mythology, not avoiding history, but healing its victims.

Personal mythology may be deemed objectively unrealistic, but it has a certain subjective realism, in that it symbolises, in the emblematic form of memories, actual suffering, helping Beuys create a new post-war, post-trauma identity and master the fascist tendencies innate to all. His work shows that personal mythology can be therapeutic and adaptive rather than insanely, hopelessly pathological, and, at its best is a way of asserting that one has given birth to oneself, in order to have the faith and gain the strength to face the world alone. It shows the adaptability and capacity the psyche can muster to survive, and also the power of self-help/healing, the hardest kind.

As a worker for spiritual renewal, Beuys, in his more lyrical works, was able to infuse outmoded cliched roles with new energy and replenish a poetically bankrupt mysticism. His ideals conveyed in the avant-garde concept of art as psycho-social intervention in modern society's sinister open-air prison which the world is becoming. He attempted to stay ahead of the collective which rapidly assimilated any work which was in the least bit forward looking, by turning it into information.

Post-modernist thinking (page 34 Diverging Critiques) posits that there is no reality to the ideas of authenticity, selfhood - even creativity and reality itself - ideas contradicted by Beuys' belief in the possibility of being a shaman. These refuted ideas insist that one can appear to be an authentic self and creative subject, but this is merely a matter of learning to use the codes that create the social illusion of unique identity and originality, i.e. learning to be a performer. One important thing about Beuys was that while his personality was clearly a part of his art, art was a way of life for him and an end in itself - Seamus Heaney's dictum - "the end of art is peace", with creativity as reparation, making good what has been damaged by one's own badness, and ultimately making oneself good -

Stages of the Son

empowered bewilderment
at beauty which is ~~absent~~^{present} ~~from~~ⁱⁿ my dreams
the omega-pointed star return
poet to a place where shines serene
this days' bird soul flying above calmed water
~~escaped~~^{returned} to perch on a white wall
sained all, in brief, so deep.

GR

Beuys' materials, such as his fat and felt, were used to rearticulate the sense of being a self, a subject, and, more broadly, what is general to being human. His shamanistic inclinations have often been interpreted as a revival of primitivism, a gross misunderstanding, since it involves the civilizing of the pathologically primitive by warm empathic containment. This may be seen as an absurd, excessive mystification, but it is not, since the mystic may be said to withdraw from the world to communicate with his or her introjects, and, most importantly to recover a sense of being a real, creative and ultimately true self, able to collect and preserve examples of feeling alive, instances of spontaneous gesture and personal idea. This process involves a sort of self-containment, indeed, the seemingly sealed self-containment necessary for the creative conversion of raw

experience into usable form. The self-containment of art and artist are necessary for the creative recovery of a meaningful sense of true selfhood, with a change from a destructive to a creative attitude to life.

Beuys, as a mature post-war German artist, wished his "social sculpture" to give such containment, converting society from a false to a true state of mind and spirit, so that society as whole would become good and mature enough to facilitate the maturation of the individuals that constitute it, it would encourage the individual's social self to serve his or her spiritual or creative self; the opposite being the case in a bad, immature, non-facilitative society. The individual, guilty self is reborn as the empathic, concerned self, such a change being the essence of creativity. His intention was a healthy amorphousness, a chaos in a known medium which consciously warmed a cold, torpid form from the past, making possible future forms; to seek to lead art back to life. His performance of art as life was a provocative evocation addressed to all spontaneity in the spectator, that can lead to the centre of often suppressed feeling, to the soul, or whatever one wishes to call this subconscious focal point. The suppressed feeling is guilt, which itself suppresses empathy - if guilt involves a death wish, then empathy restores the wish for life and results in a recognition, no matter how belatedly, of a common humanness: empathy seeming a rather ironic effort to achieve mutual regard, that is, to be mirrored by one's victim so that one can love oneself despite one's destructive tendencies. Nevertheless, ironic or no, empathy, whenever and however it is achieved, is the final step in the maturation of feeling and thus of being human - "see where the victor-victim bleeds".²

The victimiser must put himself or herself in the place of his or her victim, and so feel what it would be like to live and die as a victim, and so suffer as the victim suffered, die as the victim died; if internally rather than in external reality or, in time, both. This may be considered a mystical conversion experience, but it promises to change the old

ending to a new beginning, in which ones' collective self and ones' personal self, ones' wish to merge with others and wish to be separate, ones' sense of comfortably being a one among innumerable others but also of being individuated among them will thus exist on balance and harmony - Eurythmy, as Steiner formulated.

Again, with regard to Beuys' healing of himself through his audience and of his spectators through himself in his works, he thought of his works as a kind of psychological process that attempted to heal illness, which, for him, was always spiritual and physical at the same time. He saw illnesses as almost always spiritual crises in life in which old experiences and phases of thought were cast off in order to allow positive changes. The difficult situation of the body symbolises the difficulties of the psyche - it is as hard to effect a cure of the latter as it is the former, yet a cure must be worked at. One cannot give up and remain still, however hostile and resigned one is to one's pathology. One is a victim, but not helpless and may be helped; with effort, health and vitality can be achieved. this may not occur smoothly and unequivocally, it may never be complete, but will not be reversible - that is, good may come of the direst situation and circumstances.

Through this work, learning how to contain oneself - to establish reciprocity between ones' own divergent elements and thus a unity of being - this is the highest art. Spiritual birth may always be parthenogenetic - the self generation of new from an old self, yet, in this also, communal help can play a part.

Those who see Beuys as a fraud or dim-witted ham actor do not understand that it is possible to change oneself with the help of a single good object: that it is possible to be a good enough mother to oneself, to say nothing of the measurable advantage one has if one has a good mother! Better still, both parents!

Characterised as Utopian in his activism, using often seemingly hermetic symbolism derived from his own mythologised experiences, he advocated his theory of "social sculpture". The means he employed were eccentric, but in some respects he occupies a place in a familiar lineage within modern art, beginning with the Impressionists, in which it is not seen to be the business of the artist to function politically in any material or organisational sense to bring about change in the world, but to do so through the example of his art, having a consistent idealism.

Considered by Kuspit to be the Last Expressionist³ and by Adrian Henri⁴ (Total Art page 147) as quintessentially German and undefinable, Beuy's motivating force for a new spiritual collective was creativity, and, under its influences, when liberated, life was empowered to take on the quality of art. His mixture of social radicalism, shamanistic mystification and entrepreneurial skill, combined with a genuine feeling for the uncanny produced a corpus of work which often allegorises the position of the artist in modern society. This work was less strident than, for example, the blatant anti-capitalistic critiques produced by his fellow-countryman, Hans Haake. Criticized pejoratively for the deeply subjectivist nature of his work in contrast to the abstract universality of his theorizing his oeuvre has had enormous impact throughout the western art world. He had, though a demagogue, the essential quality of imbuing his works with life elan, vital, or mysterious life force, in Bergson's philosophy, and it is this contemplative resource which gives the best of his work the same eternal characteristics as the best of Rothko, Pollock or Morris Louis, on the one hand, or classical Chinese painting e.g. the anonymous "Clear Weather in the Valley", on the other. Romantic in impulse and idea, Neo Classical in presentation of his drawings in particular. His works have affinities with Celtic ornament and cave drawings. In all of them, they centre on the intimate bond of human, nature and animal in the sympathetic magic of pre-Christian religions and the transubstantiation in the Eucharist, the most important element of the liturgy.

1. Page 165 Diverging Critiques.
2. James Shirley, Death the Leveller.
3. Page 37 Diverging Critiques.
4. Total Art Page 147.

CHAPTER II

At the beginning of 1974 Joseph Beuys made a lecture tour of the United States which he called "Energy Plan for the Western Man", "Energy Plan" consisted of no precise solutions or advice but was the continuous physical and spiritual interaction between the artist and his audience. Beuys aimed at creating, or recreating, an all encompassing unity between emotional and spiritual, human, animal and vegetable realms. He referred to historic figures like the Renaissance philosopher Campanella, who envisaged a "Sun State" to quote Beuys "one day man like a God will create his own planet - a spiritual state."¹

Beuys also sought to replace the aura that Walter Benjamin had thought lost from both artwork and artist - Benjamin believed that the aureole phenomena had withered in the age of mechanical reproduction and that uniqueness and permanence in artwork were no longer possible. The uniformity - inseparability of art and life in the person of Beuys resulted in the ambivalent use of the concepts of art and anti-art, which did not necessarily for him contain opposition but held a methodical function in the attainment of new positions.

Beuys was critical of eccentric and idiosyncratic behaviour in artists while defending the rights of the individual against any institutional encroachment, believing that the go must be developed not for its own sake but because it is a social necessity. "If one is interested only in self-realisation one cannot make anything worthwhile... to do this you have to have thought about forming and how ideas of forming stem from history."²

As a reflection on the preceding I would like to insert the following

to define
"I am an upland thorn"
the image fades
were I wind-blown
I'd not have stayed

I am something that is
others may see
caught as their glances pass -
not quite an entity?

I am something that grows
varied may be;
something that sometimes shows
what it is to be.

GR

"Neither heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal,
have we made these. As thine own free and honourable creator
and shaper, thou shalt fashion thyself howsoever thou
pleasest. Thou canst descend to the animals or rise to the
heights, transforming thyself back into the divine - as thou
wiltst."

Pico della Mirandola "On Human Dignity"

This may be taken as indicative of the Beuysian concept of the
spirituality of a mature culture. Beuys regarded a spiritual
structure as a sine qua non for his work. He maintained that
his theory of knowledge stemmed from probing the moment of
origin of free, individual, productive potency - creativity -
thus reaching the threshold where a human being experiences
himself primarily as a spiritual being. This concept of art
carries within itself not only the revolutionizing of the
historic, bourgeois concept of knowledge - materialism,
positivism - but also of religious activity. Within this
concept, communication must be reciprocal, never a one-way
flow from the teacher to the taught, the teacher should take
equally from the taught. Thus oscillates, at all times and
everywhere, in every conceivable internal and external
circumstance, between all degrees of ability, in the

workplace, institutions and schools, the master-pupil/transmitter-receiver relationship.

There are manifold ways of achieving this, corresponding to the varying gifts of individuals and groups. Beuys' idea of the role of art was to enlarge its effectiveness beyond the idea of art as coming out of conventional art history, through the element of freedom in creativity. If this enlarging of art includes the whole creative process, it follows that every human being is an artist in the sense that individuals can develop their own capacity; for art means the power of creativity including science and religion.

Without first looking to the point from where creativity springs no good results can be achieved. Culture is related to freedom because culture implies freedom - there can be no repression at any point, and art is the only power - political, revolutionary and evolutionary - to free humanity from repression. Aesthetics must be set directly in the context of human existence, and art be a weapon for all people, destroying its own current, narrow boundaries, becoming interdisciplinary.

Beuys, while using the system in which he found himself to maximum capacity, had the feeling that another kind of life, perhaps in a transcendental area, would give him a better possibility to influence or work within this contradiction. The element of his anthropological understanding of sculpture was related to the social body and appeared as a land of secret affinity in his life. For him, human creativity attained fulfillment in a non-rational spiritualisation surpassing the arts and sciences.

In participating in performances, he concurred that his arms were social rather than aesthetic, and aimed at, especially in his Fluxus pieces, an elimination of the fine arts, demonstrated by the desire to direct wasted emotional and human capabilities towards socially constructive goals. These pieces seem to have an underlying belief in animism, the

conviction that all objects possess life, meaning and vitality. Beuys' performances were designed to elicit, not outrage, but attack indifference and stereotypical thinking. He attempted to set in motion an energy which would awaken the sensibility of a human creative existence. He considered that any works which revealed the slightest trace of struggle between body and soul should be seen as unresolved and imperfect - the whole body must become soul. Then one knows that humanity is endowed with spirituality: that what is visible within becomes a source of images invested with its own higher dimensions, a source of ability to perceive the power of the Trinity as a three-fold entity, the evolutionary power and principle which emanates from man.

The influence of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Anthroposophy, on Beuys' work can be considered quite crucial. For Steiner, the true meaning of the mandate "know thyself" lies in man's following of the occult way of the evolution of the Cosmos. The self is born out of the whole universe and man's own spiritual ascent ultimately leads him to merge in the whole Cosmos. The aim of self-knowledge is to give man his true place in the world in order to reveal to him its true meaning. Steiner goes on to elucidate the basic physiological conditioning of Anthroposophy, which means alienation from the modern world. Steiner wrote that materialism had led to a tremendous upsurge in intellectual power and activity with merely the satisfaction of physical needs in view. It was, therefore, clear to Steiner, through occultism, why the contrast between religion and science, expressed in so many different movements and sects, is so great. There is only one solution, which is that the three branches of culture, religion, art and science, must again be reunited, enriching each other. Spiritually, life must stem from unity. It was the task of the artist to bring unity to the world. In the mature work of Joseph Beuys, science art and religion are again one. Since Beuys freely admitted to having followed Steiner's line of thought, it is useful to sum up Steiner's beliefs, which teach that every physical or material thing is

born out of the spiritual, an essential but abstract consciousness of spirit.

Steiner, like Beuys, saw the figure of Christ as central to his cosmology: Christ's coming was in essence initiatory, returning man to a consciousness of his own divine origin. Apparently, then, such Steinerian ideas represent the physical basis of Beuys' performance pieces. These are the concrete manifestations of the polarised schemes of the Beuys theory of social sculpture, and thus account for his emblematic or symbolic visualisations.

1. Page 9 J. B. in America Energy Plan for the Western Man.
2. Page 12 Energy Plan for the Western Man.

CHAPTER III

The materials Beuys made use of in what may be considered a transcendental sense were principally fat and felt, though it could be maintained that all of his activities, including his teaching, which he considered increasingly important, were transcendent. When approaching a piece of work or an action, Beuys held that he did not know anything about how the process of the work would run, saying that, when an action ran, his preparation worked because he was prepared to do a thing without having pre-empted its outcome. He disliked the term "artist" because it is an allusion to a kind of traditional understanding in a very restricted way. He dealt with the idea of art in the future; there being on one side the physical consequences of thought, forms realised in buildings, in architecture, in agriculture; in so-called sculptures because they have a special form, they imply a special imagination rather than being only a repetition of the given.

It is possible to see those tools as the result of a process, and from this point one should look at the source, where the art process starts, which meant for Beuys giving form to material conditions. In this way Beuys considered himself a transmitter, meaning that the origin of the flow of information came, not from the matter of the sculpture or action, but from the "I", from an idea. He wanted his work to become a source of energy, like an atomic power station. He realised that if one wants to explain oneself, one must produce something tangible, but, since after a while such presentations have only the function of a historical document, so objects were no longer very important to him; he wanted to get the origin of matter, to the thought behind it, seeing the artist as a provocateur, provoking meaning to evoke something.

Beuys believed that art alone makes life possible. For him, without art, man was inconceivable in physiological terms. He did not accept the materialist doctrine which claims that mind and art can be dispensed with just because man is a more or

less highly developed mechanism governed by chemical processes. He held that man consisted of not only chemical processes but also of metaphysical occurrences, that man is only truly alive when he realises he is a creative artistic being involved in all realms of life.

He advocated an aesthetic involvement in science, economics, politics, religion - every sphere of human endeavour. In the simplest terms he was trying to reaffirm the concept of art and creativity in the face of the Marxist doctrine which defined man exclusively as a social being. While accepting that man is not free in many respects, being dependant on his social circumstances, Beuys maintained that he is free in his thinking, the point of origin of art - especially sculpture - which for him was a definition of man.

This theory was dependant on the fact that, for Beuys, every man was an artist and had to be encountered when he was free, when he was thinking. The concepts of thinking, feeling and wanting were related to sculpture; thought is represented by form, feeling by motion or rhythm, will by chaotic force.

In 1982 Beuys proposed that his work for the Documenta 7 exhibition at Kassel be the planting of 7,000 oak trees, the site of each one being marked with a basalt pillar. His reasons for choosing the oak tree as a species were to produce a new organic architecture to take action devoted to the future. He was, of course, aware that oak trees had a specific role to play not only during the Nazi era but even before then in the Wilhelmina period, going back to the early Celtic and Germanic times when the Druidic tradition was prevalent. He thought, however, that even though its possible to misuse these traditions, they did reveal another kind of factor which showed the polarity between the almost barbarous culture of the North and the Southern or Latin conscience of urban character. He believed that the decentralised, intinerant and nomadic elements in Celtic and Germanic nature were relevant once again. It was the specific incarnation of the oak together with the forces of nature which had already

occurred in mythological times rather than the ideological manipulations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which prompted Beuys to use it. In his work 7000 Oaks Beuys wished to challenge the so-called German question, that of retrogressive German nationalism, since it was not the Germans who availed themselves most of the oak, but rather the Celts, that is to say a people living principally in France.

He did not mean the growth process to end, insisting on the continuation of interrelating socio-ecologically all the forces present in society until an intellectual action which extended to the fields of culture, economy and democratic rights existed. It was a question of developing a new concept of capital which takes into account, before all else, the inner needs of man. At the present, man's inner needs appear once again to be in strict relation with what the ancient cultures expressed about them, in other words, understood as a spiritual action, one which was manifested in the Druids. In this way the past supports the future in a single picture and man today is able to personify simultaneously both past and future and with only a little effort can draw from it substance immeasurably greater than anything humanity could previously have had. Guided by the necessity of what the situation requires i.e. reafforestation etc. man can have in fifty years time a relationship with nature which is fifty percent or a hundred percent better and so on, and all this is precisely because trees are considered to be alive just as human conscience may be considered to be growing and its source, the human spirit; the capital used is the human ability for creativity, freedom and self-determination in all working places.

Beuys chose 7,000 oaks as a kind of proportion and dimension, firstly because the seven represent as a very old rule for planting trees, as is known already from existing places and towns in England and America. As the Druids use of their oaks to define their holy places, so Beuys hoped his tree planting would add to the sanctity of the environment. For Beuys working with trees was a new step, but not a really new

dimension in his whole concept of the metamorphosis of everything on this earth and of the metamorphosis of the understanding of art. It was about the change of the social body in itself to bring it to a new social order for the future in comparison with the existing private capitilistic system and the state centralised communistic system. It was also to make clear a reasonable, practical and anthropological and spiritual necessity to be viewed in relation to this permanent performance in the development of the trees in time.

Beuys believed that love is the most creative and matter - transforming power. The outward appearance of every object he made was the equivalent of some aspect of inner human life.¹ For example, his rubberised box of 1957. This box came out of a critical period of his life in Dusseldorf - Heerdt and expressed his inner condition.² His feelings then had a special kind of darkness, almost black, like the mixture of rubber and tar which covers the box. It was equivalent to a pathological state, expressing the need to create a space in the mind from which all disturbances were removed - an empty insulated space within which investigations can take place and from this concentration new experiences could emerge. This, the principle of the insulator was a prerequisite for every experiment with his theory of sculpture.

In Lavender Filter (1961)³ the principle of chaotic energy is related to the warmth process in plant growth. The oil filtered through the cotton cover is a highly developed kind of fat produced by the flowers of the plant, and it evaporates up and out into the atmosphere - the passage through the filter brings a refinement, a metaphor for finer quality which could be applied to the spiritual context. The filter at the base of the sculpture retains part of the oil as it spreads outward in time, and then becomes resin; the process of filtration takes place as the filters stain spreads slowly with time. This is the other side of the filter, a new refined essence, the spreading of ideas to the different force fields of human ability, a kind of inspiration that takes effect through a physical process of capillary absorption,

analogous with psychological infiltration or even the infiltration of institutions. There is also the smell, as ninety percent of the oil evaporates, leaving only a residue of resin. The association of wounds is present in the filter, in the process of dripping, or the connotations of gauze as porous protection and absorbent bandage.

With "Fat Chair" (1963)⁴ Beuy's intention in using fat was to stimulate discussion, the flexibility of the material appealing to him particularly in its reaction to the temperature changes. This flexibility is psychologically effective, people instinctively feeling it relates to inner process and feelings. The discussion he wanted to stimulate was about the potential of sculpture and culture, their meaning, what language is about and what human production and creativity are about, so he took an extreme position in sculpture and a material that was very basic to life and not associated with art. Fifteen years later Beuys said that without the "Fat Chair" and the "Fat Corners" as vehicles, none of his activities would have had such an effect.

"Spade with two Handles" (1965)⁵ signifies a special kind of compound action for people working the earth together - without the spirit of co-operation, harmony and even humour it would be impossible to work with the implement. Brotherhood and love are implied by the heart shape of the iron blade, while the handles are like aorta and arteries, so there is relationship to the blood stream, and iron is an important component of blood. During the action "24 hours... and in us.. under us...land under" Beuys held the spade at heart level and sometimes raised it above his head; an act which requires balance. From time to time other spades were rammed into the floor or thrown like spears, making a hard acoustic interruption of the tempo, as often happened in his actions. There is an evident relationship to agriculture and even to hunting, as there is to the warmth and love needed for regeneration of the earth. Spectators and visitors used the spades to dig furrows before and after the action.

The acoustic element and sculptural quality of sound were always essential to Beuy's art, and, in terms of music perhaps his background in piano and cello draw him to them; he also made use of sound as a sculptural material to enlarge the whole of sculpture from the point of view of using materials. Therefore not only solid materials like metals, clay and stone, but also sound, noise, melody using language all become the material of sculpture and acquire their form through thought, so thought is taken as a sculptural means. This is an extreme position, the real transcendental position of production in general, in opposition to the specialists isolated point of view which places the arts and other kinds of work in sharp opposition.

Beuys believed it was never sufficient to have people participating in a performance from the stand-point of an outsider, leading them towards an activism which was for them devoid of all content. Man should not express his feelings through a particular negative activity, such as breaking something, uttering accusations or destroying things, but must possess a redeeming sense of social goodness; Beuys never expected anything positive from superficial activism. In his actions there was always the difficulty of communication rather than one of involvement, hence the principle of Eros was always present as a possibility of physical contact with the community, as shown by the use made of his materials. In his case communication manifested itself with such intensity that people who understood it reacted in different ways.

The material used during an action was often initially raw, chaotic and intrinsically shapeless, sometimes treated with heat to the point where it melted. When he spoke about the heat generated in these processes he did not mean heat but what is

called Eros, earthy or sexual love. By thermoplastic he meant a metaphorical concept of heat. While not saying that the body should be the most important means of radiant communion, but that he had no other means of communication except the body; he had no interest in allowing the body to act directly thus transmitting its radiation to other human beings; contrarily, what interested him was that his spiritual intention should achieve something; to this extent his actions were entirely therapeutic. The creative forces stemming from the subconscious find themselves in an extreme situation as in the thermal process. Here the concept of harmony, long discarded and considered bourgeois, is extremely important. Beuys considered the concept of harmony contingent with freedom and that it was only possible to do something if freedom has been lived and felt, which is the process of consciousness.

There was a concept of death in Beuy's work, being defined as the principle which produces specialisation in materials. Many people think this way and realise that contemporary civilization is a dying one because of the excesses of materialism and the narrow concept of science. Here I would like, by way of light relief, to interpose some verses of my own commenting on aspects of a declining personal civilization:

Reverie

This form of civilisation is not high;
you fuss about your post-prandial needs
as you have done for almost sixty years -
meagre things are all your memories -
they are not much
to remember.

My acidie distresses you. You see
my morose features relax at midday
- "conceited idle cur" your father said -
amorphous, wheezing, drowze an hour away
- he has money -
after coffee.

You ever-occupied. Perennial works
of specious good for those without my cash:
your generosity does not exceed
your means, O armchair saint. Behind my back
you never squander
never spare.

You had once fire, so I thought, in your eyes:
no: a light of passion for little children
which you had cared for; you were trained to nurse
me, an invalid of dissipation
one late summer
at my world's end;

and yours. In truth, we were true foils: we held
each other well continued for a short while
till we became uneasy in our sight,
became apart and chill; no longer mild:
there was no children
in our body.

We are not bound to each; we seem to be;
there is cause for our shallow combination;
I reason hard against you in my heart -
you have friends, or urchins: untied laces
in my shoes are
unremarked.

For me, I have arrived; I go nowhere;
and you, my neat grey bride, are desolate:
we both from new and strong and rising lines
came: your father failed; your family felt
retrenchment, then
abrasion.

I pitied you: I pity you and I. I had
early suspected I was useless
but the fates smiled and pressed unwontedly
small fame, large fortune, you impoverished
scintillating
jewel of sugar.

In my house I have watched your lustre lessen:
the cynic trees, garnish of my demesne
have grown rank, leaf, blossom and fructify:
a few have died; those mirror me, in fine
famously
empty.

Now we, as autumn mornings, thin and sharp -
warmth cannot penetrate our deepening shade -
calm and dignified, translucent faces
we physically concur, are apposite
as roses with
marbled-pink petals,

Swayed by a land breeze coming off the hills
to the east at you upon the sloping lawn.
I would I could ask pardon for your life
of you: but I will not: the sun dips in
clouds gathered by
the blustering wind.

GR

If one looks at this concept of science and materialism from a Beuysian historical point of view, inquiring into its methods and the reasons it has become sterile, it becomes necessary to reconsider the entire history of philosophy, more or less from the time when myth and mythology underwent a change, where human thinking was transformed by revelation. In order to say anything about life, one has to understand death first. In the first phase one had to experiment with death, this consequently enables one to think scientifically in an exact abstract fashion which is the methodology of reduction in philosophy. An abstract way of looking at this concept is to

say that it has been proved or that it will become apparent at some point in the future, that the first phase in the development of the natural succession the liberation process must necessarily pass through death. Then a parallel process comes into being. Here the whole process is illustrated through which philosophy and science developed in the direction of materialism, its ultimate greatness. Now it can be ascertained that Christianity manifested itself on the same plane as Plato. The question which must be asked is what was the task of Christianity? If the phenomenon is carefully examined, it may be observed that in the church Christianity has largely remained within its mythological framework, whereas in Beuys's opinion true Christianity developed in science, enabling it to free mankind from the old collective unit.

Methodologically considered, it is obvious that man can free himself from the concept of science, but the first step is the process of abstraction, materialism, thus Christianity evolves along a path which evolves through abstraction, through Kant, and materialism ultimately towards death, as seen in analytical terms a path away from life, from man; because man has been able to develop himself as an individual, in succeeding in throwing off the ancient shackles. With this method it has been possible to put into practice Christ's promise of Liberation and Salvation. Christ is 'The steam engine.'⁶

The concept of death to be preserved but not in a one-sided form: it must be linked with the process of life. If man is wholly conditioned by his environment, by what is already there he can't be free; he can only be free if he is not governed by his environment.

To what extent is form really free? Is it conditioned by external factors? What relationship is between the external world and what man does by and for himself is the really vital question, the point which decides everything, and also supplies the answer to the question as to what is the next

revolutionary step. Entertaining doubts is an excellent way of avoiding excessive credulity. Engaging in mere speculation is no longer to be wished: what is required is a real consciousness and creativity. This is why the problem must be posed in the form of a question rather than in making unbounded assertions. Can man truly contribute something to the world, something from the realm of ideas which lies beyond the terrestrial, material world, something which is not of this world. A limit is established, a line containing the environment, the surrounding world and in the middle is man. Then one is faced with a theoretical question - what happens to the other actors? Are there any other areas of activity? If one says; here is man, here is an animal, here is a plant, here a rock, here matter and so on, then one is already talking about life, about feeling or instincts and about consciousness. Everything is decided at the limit where it is decided to what extent it is possible to have other actors. It is at this juncture it is decided whether or not man is free. Of course man is always influenced by his environment, being a part of it; the question is whether he is completely governed by it.

If man is determined by his surroundings then his destiny is to live in subjugation. But this is true only in material terms, only in respect of man's physical being; what one must be concerned with is part of one's being not connected with the environment. It is only from a theoretical point of view that one can decide whether freedom exists or not: when talking about freedom one has to determine its foundations, and that can only be done by ascertaining its limits: one may say that freedom is possible but freedom cannot come from the environment, it has to come from creativity, thus freedom = creativity = man. Therefore freedom is achieved on the basis of the creative principle, in which case who else can be God except man. If one does not wish to go quite this far one might say, using a scientific term, that God is a generator. Then one must ask if man is a god how come he is faced with the problem of death? How is it to be dealt with? One may attempt to answer this by asserting that man simply accepts

death as a methodology of creation, because man wants death for himself since he deeply realises that without the element of death, man would be unable to live in a properly aware manner. If he were only interested in life man might just as well be such a piece of seaweed; however he is interested in death in the spirit, in form. One may say that man is a god, or at any rate that he is an extension of God, a co-operator. Death is the basis of consciousness, because the entire development which takes place through Christianity, the development in philosophy and science, is a reduction of life. The western concept of materialism refers to a dead materialism, to chemical analysis to statistics; all these are lifeless abstractions: Here it is clear that consciousness is impossible without death. Thus in order to overcome death one has to cultivate an awareness of it; in Beuy's words "Death keeps me awake".

The cause is much deeper and has something to do with Christianity. This does not mean that Christianity is a failure but simply that it was only a preliminary step, albeit an important one, and that Christianity in its open social aspects, can only now begin by thinking about death in positive terms, to see the world principally with the idea of creativity, and ability of the people.

Here I would like again to offer a meditation of my own:

of the body of Christ
leave to the world a mirror
few shall hear
a moments terrible ecstasy
unknowing fear
the joy of solitude
with many men
a way, a passing, ever straight
then turn again
a dream of a bright company, all quite alone
journeying to a holy place

and there are none
suffusion from vast gatherings
come unto one

Beuys always felt that the tantric Buddhist form would perhaps have the most possibilities to carry out this openness of creativity which can best integrate an economic enterprise with a spiritual one, being radically and clearly related to all the effects of humankind's work - what they do with their hands, what they feel with their soul and what they think. He thought that it was almost a necessity that such old traditions appear with a very modern futurology so that the people can see that the Buddhist intention, the reality of the Buddhist and Bodhisattvas is not a historical symbolic museum but something that works through life. Every human work, to bring everything in the evolution of humanity and the world to another stage was his goal; how to bring people's ability, meaning their creative potency, to work in the economy, an economy that is an organic unit of the spirit with physical labour. It was important for him to work on every point of creativity and see how the human being stands in the energy that comes out from the surrounding world, particularly the younger generation.

1. Page 116 Energy Plan for the Western Man.
2. Page 70 Joseph Beuys by Tisdall.
3. Page 148 J. Beuys by Tisdall.
4. Page 72 J. B. by Tisdall and page 70 Stachelhaus.
5. Page 84 J. B. by Tisdall.
6. Page 176 Energy Plan for the Western Man.

CHAPTER IV

Beuys felt that the human being is the producer of time, that man alone determines the content of the age in which he lives. For the content of his own drawings sometimes very many separate drawings were used to make a single unit; at other times single drawings stood alone. "The Secret Block"¹ was in Beuys understanding one work, not a collection but a kind of book having a consistency of themes and an idea of a history: Every drawing has a special size and colour; there are oil colours, water colours, pencil drawings, ink drawings, fat drawings and drawings in different materials. Beuys considered that it might be used to develop another embryonic history. The first drawing in it was made about 1936 and it ends about 1970. It consists in total of about 500 drawings mostly relating to creative powers and having an almost mystical nature, though Beuys himself roundly denied the mystical content of most of his work unless mysticism was equated with creative powers. Mysticism for him meant the undeclared secrets of life, but he declined to refer to it as mysticism, calling it the unsolved questions in the whole of culture. He posited that there is a kind of culture which is only interested in and able to develop material conditions. It is able only to exploit the material conditions and resources of the earth and along with this to exploit human abilities the profit of a very few very mighty personalities and institutions. This meant the problem of state and money and one can take this as a kind of international dilemma since all over the world it is principally the same; exploitation after the materialistic understanding of life to exploit everything. In comparison Beuys was dealing with the necessity to enlarge this understanding. This would introduce in to every existing problem a spiritual dimension and not only the material conditions where everyone can number, rate and tell the profit.

This stands at the centre of the question of man-what is the goal and sense of human life? His (Beuys') intuition gives a new sense to people in the form of a germ towards a much more

enriched society than in any previous civilization. This is to give people a kind of power, a vitality and an ability of spirit to surpass and redefine the border of a restrictive civilization existing as a repressive centralism, that is to transform the ideal of what the capitalistic systems have done to people. Previous times when humanity was spiritually very evolved are known of, now western culture is materialistically very evolved: this imbalance will have to be redressed and the future must lead to unification, since there is need of both. Beuys had nothing against the materialistic methodology of analytics but believed that it had to be enlarged so as not to get caught in a very restricted one-sided way of looking at life.

The problems of life, soul, humankind's spirit, the problems of intuition, imagination and inspiration, of birth and death and of survival can never be solved from a materialistic, scientific understanding. Beuys stressed repeatedly the necessity to maintain the powers of enquiry of materialistic, at the same time enlarging the scale and circle of aspects. Very traditionally one might say that humankind needs interdisciplinary discussion on the problems of life, spirit and nature. However, he did not favour people going to the East in search of spiritual enrichment, what is needed is an open overground culture. Western man need not creep into the caverns of primitive superstitions or other mentalities and highly developed cultures of the past since what they hold is already living in Western abilities.

Western man has only to see that the materialistic understanding of the world has a lot to do with the idea of Christianity. Although Christ was for Beuys the last of the spiritual masters, this Christian spirit was closely related to the development of the idea of analysis and the growth of this cultural step took place largely in the Western hemisphere, one now being able to see the whole world as one culture in which the last master came or was at any rate co-opted more to the Western part: though proclaiming himself for

everybody, Christ's message was taken by the spirits of the West.

The real fate of the Western world, starting from the time of Christ matured in parallel to impulses which came from other cultures. One has only to look at the cult of Apollo in ancient Greece where there was a similar understanding of the idea of Christ. Apollo then appeared as a kind of precursor for the Christ ideal, so it is no wonder that at almost the same time as when Christ appears that a methodology coming out of Greek culture is working with analysis. Because of this the whole range of philosophy throughout the Western world exhibits to a more or less greater extent the analytic way to reach a material consciousness, to come to death, like Christ. But because of this spiritual declaration of a material intention that is the Resurrection the whole of materialism is a spiritual phenomenon. When people have too little power or insight to overlook this methodology in the Christian impulse, they regress to a kind of oriental one. This is what exists in the churches, the repetition of an almost oriental rite with no idea of how to proclaim Christianity. The mission of the methodology of materialism in Christianity is to make clear the problem of death, to overcome it. First people have to die in a way, to experience the meaning of death as an escape from earthy conditions, to go to the spirit generally and principally. This is what Buddhist philosophy did to avoid the earth; this getting off the cycle of birth, death and rebirth was one state of humanity's consciousness. Christianity stressed a much more complicated system of development and was in this way the dialectic system in its highest state of sense, while every other kind of comprehension of dialectic system distorts the complex system of what Christianity holds in terms of humankind's transformation towards the spirit. Death belongs to life; in its spiritual meaning life is not possible without death: this again is a kind of mystery, but it is not a mystification since it is experienced by everyone.

Everybody can, indeed must, look through this constellation of powers. So again it deals only with the conglomeration of powers and energies in the material world. One could say that to overcome the material way of thought is to surpass the death of material things by adding spirituality to them.

More clearly one might see the problem by looking at the earth upon which everyone lives and which consists of different mineral substances. This is the last materialisation of the spirit, one could say. but it leads back towards life.

If one can see that the earth is alive, then one can also see that all objects are living. God, the life generating principle, is in everything, everything in nature has its own mystery, every tree, every animal, its own secrets, which until now have not been solved, which are not even considered in contemporary civilisation with a materialistic polytheistic understanding of science and art.

Beuys stressed time and again the necessity to change the comprehension of science and art and to broaden the idea of points of reality. He believed that one has not to move too quickly from the death-condition or the materialised aspect of the earth. One must first consider that the earth is dead and has in a way been so from the beginning of its evolution, and how, this death can be overcome, renewed or regenerated depends on humanity's responsibility since there is no other spiritual being to do this work: only people can do it. This charges humankind with a total responsibility for the fate of the earth and for its own possibility for life and survival. Death is a reality and every day international power compounds this problem with ever better ways to die, ever more destruction. Therefore humanity has to stand up or rise against this tendency; there is the possibility for its future and this is the secret or mystery existing in Christianity or in the impulse of Christ.

The over coming of death is more than symbolised in Jesus Christ, it is real. If one comes to a space with a big flame

one will get burnt and one cannot say "this is the symbol of a flame" because one will die of it's heat. So Christ is not a symbol for something, but the substance in itself meaning life and the power of life. Without the substance of Christ the earth would have already died. In Christ's early death on the cross, one could take the cross as a signature or perhaps as a symbol for the earth, because the cross could mean the materialistic constellation, a vertical and horizontal line for Beuys being the lines of construction of a cube and exactly crystalised condition of death, the exact proper transformation in a kind of letter of what the fate of the earth from the beginning of the influence of Christ towards the present time means.

The whole of civilisation is nailed on this crystal structure of which every modern skyscraper is built. The whole building system and the whole analytical system have a lot to do with orientating basic mathematics. Beuys was always wary of the use of symbols, trying to avoid their use whenever possible, but in translating energy to a kind of image or writing, signs or letters invariably have to be used. So the cross was for him a kind of letter to clarify what was going on, showing people information on power structures. If the people can read out of such a form what is meant, this obvious dilemma in the reception of the whole of art that being normally people cannot read what is meant. While allowing things to transmit their own radiance on a intuitive level and not asking for some sort of literal or philosophical excuse, this gap in understanding was something Beuys felt education as it is usually understood neglected. So people have to create the language in which to communicate, because the language has died, being flooded with elements of decay; the task being to bring out the new spirit in language and convey by its use possibilities for humanity for its own development. This is only possible if people look at the phenomena without prejudice. This is the barrier which must be removed and this is the dilemma because everyone thinks he already knows about the powers and how they have their links and interdependencies, due to implantation by a very restricted

educational regime in the last 200 years in schools, in universities, in the media, in the idea of science which, with this onesidedness, gave people such a kind of prejudice and understanding of life which in reality is a debasement in the reality of man. In this debased existence one can only pursue egotistic instincts, seeking only after living standards and the things that the materialistic system has developed.

It is no wonder that this occurs, since the working place, the whole enterprise for the production of these ability-commodities is in the hand of states and the capitalistic rulings of the things. So the first thing that must be done is to liberate places of education, the cultural institutions from the ruling and from the possession of the state and the economic system. Beuys' mission in both life and art was to achieve this liberation and since he was pre-eminently successful in his quest, spiritual life streams from his actions. Overall, like a spiritual therapist or shaman, as he himself would have admitted, Beuys wished to integrate or make intact humanity in the larger sense, seeking to resynthesise body and soul. Beuys made these ethical proclivities perfectly clear when he spoke of his "therapeutic, shamanistic or ancient behaviour" and stressed the idea of transformation and substance saying that such behaviour should be recognised as the search for the deepest route of the idea of spiritual life, going on to conclude that when the present stage of materialism is considered and all the things experience as negative in the current crises, it must be admitted that this stage too is an historical necessity.

When people say that Shamanistic practice is atavistic and irrational one might answer that the attitude of contemporary science is equally old fashioned and atavistic, because mankind should, by now be at another stage of development in relation to the material world. So when he appeared as a kind of a Shamanistic figure or alluded to it he did so to stress his belief in other priorities and the need to introduce a completely different plan for working with substances: for

example in places like Universities where everyone behaves so rationally, it is necessary for a kind of enchanter to appear.

The essential components of the Beuys theory of sculpture may be summarised as describing the passage of everything in the world, physical or psychological, from a chaotic undetermined state to a concrete and more ordered state, chaotic being the state of raw material and unchannelled will-power, characterised as "Warm", ordered by the state of material that has been processed or formed, symbolised by the Heart-of-movement at the centre, where it acquires form and definition and appears in crystalline state represented in Beuys diagrams by a tetrahedron and characterised as cold and intellectual. If this process goes too far, the crystal becomes a burnt out, over intellectualised clinker, and falls out of the system. Carried on to a psychological level, this is a diagram of those people who at one extreme are motivated by a chaotic warmth of will power, those in the centre who are governed by the hearts and feelings and those who have reached the over intellectualised pole of extreme theory. Ideally a balance should be achieved, although the overriding tendency at present, Beuys believed, is toward the intellectual pole.

Balance, reintegration and flexible flow between the areas of thought, feeling and will, all of which are essential, are the objective of his theory of sculpture. Moulding processes of art are taken as a metaphor for the moulding of society; hence social sculpture. The greater purpose of this mediative path is to restore unity and thereby to transcend the soul versus body, or binary division imposed by man's own constitution.

1. Page 117, 118 Stachelhaus.

CHAPTER V

There were two different concepts in the sculpture theory, sculpture and plastic. "Sculpture" (page 123 Moffit and page 69 Stachelhaus) would correspond to the German word "Bildauerei", a term specifically suggesting a process of reduction, like carving, and "Plastic" would then correspond to organic images from inside in contrast to the sculpture element. Thus when one finds a bone, one would say that its really being formed out of fluid processes, which are then solidified. Everything which becomes hardened in human physiology thus originates out of the fluidity process, and is also very clearly followed back to its embryonic state. All questions of man can only be questions of form and this is the totalised concept of art which refers principally to every mans possibility to be a creative being and to the questions of social totality. In this summation of Beuys' artistic ambitions one finds in it certain parallels with Steiners' Anthroposophical prescriptions. Just like Steiner's, Beuys cosmology arises from fluid processes. The common laws of physics. According to them, the rules of the sensory world are postulated upon revolutionary cycles of every increasing coldness or condensation and the reverse cycle of warmth, leading to liquifaction. These unending repeatable cycles find their configuration in an array of generic gases, liquids, solids and so on. According to this transmutative scheme any particular substance may conveniently serve to embody a, transcendental, essentially symbolic concept lying behind or spiritually above its particular, mundane and transient manifestation. As Steiner made clear, with condensation and solidification, or specialisation the first ideas of good and evil appeared in the universe. So, by his manipulation of his materials, in effect transmuting this process the modern artist-shaman can restore the soul facilities of his audience. The real function behind all this transformation is homeopathic magic. Moffitt, in his analysis of Beuys, characterised him as representing the white magical element of the German mystical tradition. To illustrate further the Beuys Steinerian connection an example may be

found in their coinciding concept of the function of bees which Steiner saw as representing in their work, in a kind of microcosmic way, the activity of the blood circulation in the human body as well as in the formation of the quartz crystal in the earth. On the basis of Steiner's teachings, Beuys formulated a complex system of bee symbolism¹ designed to lead directly to what he considered as occult realities. What interested him was the general warmth character, which formed an important part of his theory of sculpture, extending to social and political concepts. These concepts were illuminated in honey, wax and pollen and nectar gathered from plants. In mythological times honey-production as constituting a link between the earthly and heavenly spheres. The influx of a substance from the total environment was the essence of the bee cult². In a direct link between his artistic and political interests - manifesting his blueprints for an ecological society - Beuys saw bees as symbols of communal socialism - the hive is an organism in which all parts function as a living body: the whole bee community building a unity, which must function perfectly, but in a humane, warm way through the principal of co-operation, brotherhood.

In his action "How to Explain pictures to a dead hare."³ (1965) Beuys spent three hours explaining art to a dead hare in his lap, his head swathed in an application of honey and gold leaf. For him the hare was a symbol of birth and the incarnation. In Beuys' view this action of his seemed to be the one which most captured peoples imaginations. The idea of making an explanation of art to an animal conveys a sense of the secrecy of the world and of existence, one that appeals to the imagination. But then, even a dead animal preserves more intuitive power than some human beings, with their stubborn rationality. Thus, to reiterate, Beuys saw himself as a kind of shaman attempting to subvert the industrial/capitalist world with its all pervasive dead rationality, attempting to restore the mystical, organic and ecology values, which had been marginalised in the triumph of the mechanical ethos.

Occultism, and especially theosophy has been a major influence on twentieth century art, but Beuys went further than his predecessors like Kandinsky and Mondrian in the first instance by the dominance of sculpture in its broadest sense, in his work, and in the second, by his attempt to transform art into a kind of religio-political practice to administrate the ecological/spiritual values of Steiner. Beuys' actions can be seen as examples of the Eurhythm developed by Steiner, a practice designed to penetrate into the connection between the human being and cosmos.

1. Page 138 Moffitt.
2. Page 57 Stachelhaus.
3. Page 59 and 138 Stachelhaus.

CHAPTER VI

To conclude, the artist lives in a world governed by capital in which the destined function of each product is clearly marked. Man does not seem to be able to control the mechanisms which determine and around which passiveness and gregariousness seem to be the necessary conditions for daily life and survival. One way out of this quandary is for an artist to respond along ideological lines, such as stating a political view, an ideal for historical action or promotion of destructive negative possibilities for the world. Art is always an ideological activity against a reality which dismisses and ignores it - it is often an exercise and affirmation of the ego. This ideology of the ego as far as its application in the field of art, has as one of its champions Beuys.

Beuys was by nature a hero, one, who through charismatic leadership wanted to rediscover unity for man, to eliminate his partiality and paralysis so as to find him energy for revolution. His anthropological direction ranged from animals, plants and nature towards angels and spirits, the ideal of the ego was preached as a hymn to creativity, the awakening of energy, an archetypical romantic notion heard before in Novalis's Hymn to the Night and to the Dead.

Beuys's vociferousness was a means to the ideal where the leader seeks to unite the powers of the ego outside the confines of history and its determining forces. He particularly used history as a guide and extension of creativity, the only means which can release the individual from the partiality in which he lives, to lead on into an all embracing totality where true anthropological conditions are to be found and faced. Several recurring themes evident in romantic German culture-death, nature, the solitary hero - are taken and repropounded according to a neo/humanistic strategy which turns to art to give significance through communication. Thus art becomes the moment of strengthening between individual conscience and the memory of sociability, this

memory being the acceptance of the collective conscience, which absorbs all and destroys nothing. Only the artist/leader has the power to unite these moments. For this reason all traces of his personal presence, incorporated in his creativity, become vital links to preserve and expose. Exhibitionism became an ethic necessity by which Beuys was able to communicate his ideas and personal struggle to extract the essence of matter from the initial chaos in which he lived, and so give it recognisable form at the level of consciousness. His work contained the stigmata, the documentation of his personal and exemplary history which for this very reason is relevant and representative in terms of the collective history of man. This exemplary quality is evident in the reactions of the individual conscience of the artist, who by his nature was inclined to discard the partial and divisive truths of bourgeois science wherein evolution has been solely directed towards revolution of technical intelligence. This notion of science has not left room for the overall development of man. Its methods have served solely technical progress, without making history and reacted on man in a repressive and authoritarian way. The notion of art raised by Beuys is the permanent need for creativity and unification among the varied elements of existence. While German philosophers such as Novalis, Goethe and Schiller considered in the attempt to unify man with the transcendental powers, the method of synthesis rather than analysis as more suitable to contemplate the supernatural. Beuys insisted instead on the will and nature of the hero violating matter in person, so as to bring this more directly to the lights of consciousness, since art is not a mere image of reaction but a liberation. In this way he involved his whole personal energy, including his body, in a Socratic affront to life and space in order that personal communication through social contact may be established, a communication taking place not only on the level of man but also on the level of plants, animals and nature.

Beuys action always sustained the equation art = man. At the outset matter exists as pure energy, indistinct chaos is

subjugated to order, inherent in reason. The artist/hero then shapes the growth of his material producing a form which concurs with the developed order of man who, meanwhile, along the paralysing aspects of reason has recovered the obvious vitality of matter in nature. Beuys meant to shape as the will and representation of an ideal conception of the world where finally will, thought and feeling converge. His works therefore expand established parameters and are a pretext to lead others into the Socratic field of dialogue. The artist is the catalyst of vital, social energies which unless contained would spread in all directions, being the unlimited field of his struggle. The inevitability of the struggle exists because of the search to liberate all the universal forces, so as to gather them under the imprint of actual form, in the sense of consciousness, unifying all opposites, even death.

As death is inseparable from life and art represents the space in which extremes and conflicts are resolved, the transforming of forms does not mean a refining of things, but a cosmic encircling, which has as its centre the artists ego, in turn radiating his own forces of order and generation. If the inevitability of struggle represents the Christian in Beuys, it is also true to say that an artistic gesture is one full of significance and experience, the activation of a cosmogonic energy which compels action. The hero artist has not won struggle in advance for he still has to confront his public whose presence tends to indicate his role in terms of language.

The artist, in the end, finds the mirror-image of himself in the community which assists him and simultaneously helps him to check the elementary principle of death by acquiring immortality in history through the collective memory and culture. An exchange therefore comes about; immortality in history through personal actions and consciousness of the community through form. Thus the artist finds his own political role by exploiting his own creative attributes: the application of the ego through gestural experience: the

Dionysian tendency to open a gap in the obscure forces of nature and in the final instance, the Apollosian aim to reach the threshold of form, seen as the intensified consciousness of an anthropological totality, where nature and history discover once again the cosmic whole.

Epigraph

Requiem

it is, perhaps, to do well -
the light is held in the lamp-
dusk, and winter's wind is howling,
today much snow has fallen -
this night you lie cool:
many hands were shaken -
unknown people, unseen, speaking,
shadows at uncertain slant -
unusual, to so wait -
this night you lie cool.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Adriani, Gotz
Konnertz, Winifred
Thomas, Karin |]
]
] | <u>Joseph Beuys Life & Works</u> New York 1979

Barrons Education Series |
| | | |
| Benjamin, Walter | "The Work of Art in the Age of
Mechanical Reproduction"
in <u>Illuminations</u> | New York 1968

Harcourt Brace |
| | | |
| Campanella, Tommaso | <u>The City of the Sun</u>
a Poetical Dialogue | London 1981
University
of California
Press Ltd |
| | | |
| Henri, Adrian | <u>Total Art</u> | London, 1974
Thames and Hudson |
| | | |
| Kuoni, Carin | <u>Energy Plan for the Western Man</u>
Joseph Beuys in America | New York 1990
Four Walls
Eight Windows |
| | | |
| In Memorium, Joseph Beuys, | <u>Obituaries,</u>
<u>Essays, Speeches</u> | Bonn 1986
Inter Nations |
| | | |
| Moffitt, John F.
<u>Occultism and the Avant-Garde</u>
<u>The Case of Joseph Beuys</u> | URRI Research Press
an inprint of University
Microfilms Inc.
Ann Arbor, Michigan | 1988 |
| | | |
| Oliva, Achille Bonito, editor | <u>Arte Natura</u> | Milan 1978
Electa |
| | | |
| Stachelhaus, Heiner | <u>Joseph Beuys</u> | Dusseldorf - Classen 1978
Verlag GMBH
New York-English 1991
language edition
Abbeyville Press |

Sylvester, David, editor Newman Beuys Twombly London 1993
Klein Johns, with Anthony d'Offay
texts from Chuang Tzu
chosen by David Sylvester

Thistlewood, David, editor Joseph Beuys Liverpool 1995
Diverging University
Critiques Press and Tate
Gallery Liverpool

Tisdall, Caroline Joseph Beuys New York 1979
Guggenheim
Foundation

Wood, Frascina, Harris, Harrison
Modernism in Dispute New Haven and London 1993
Art since the Forties Yale University Press
in association with the
Open University

Buchloh, Benjamin Twilight of the Idol Art Forum January 1980