

'DU NJEMICKI'

JOSEPH BEUYS AS A LEADING EXPONENT OF
TEUTONIC MYSTICISM

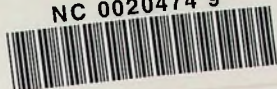
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"DU NJEMCKI"

JOSEPH BEUYS AS A LEADING EXPONENT OF TEUTONIC MYSTICISM

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FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2



FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4

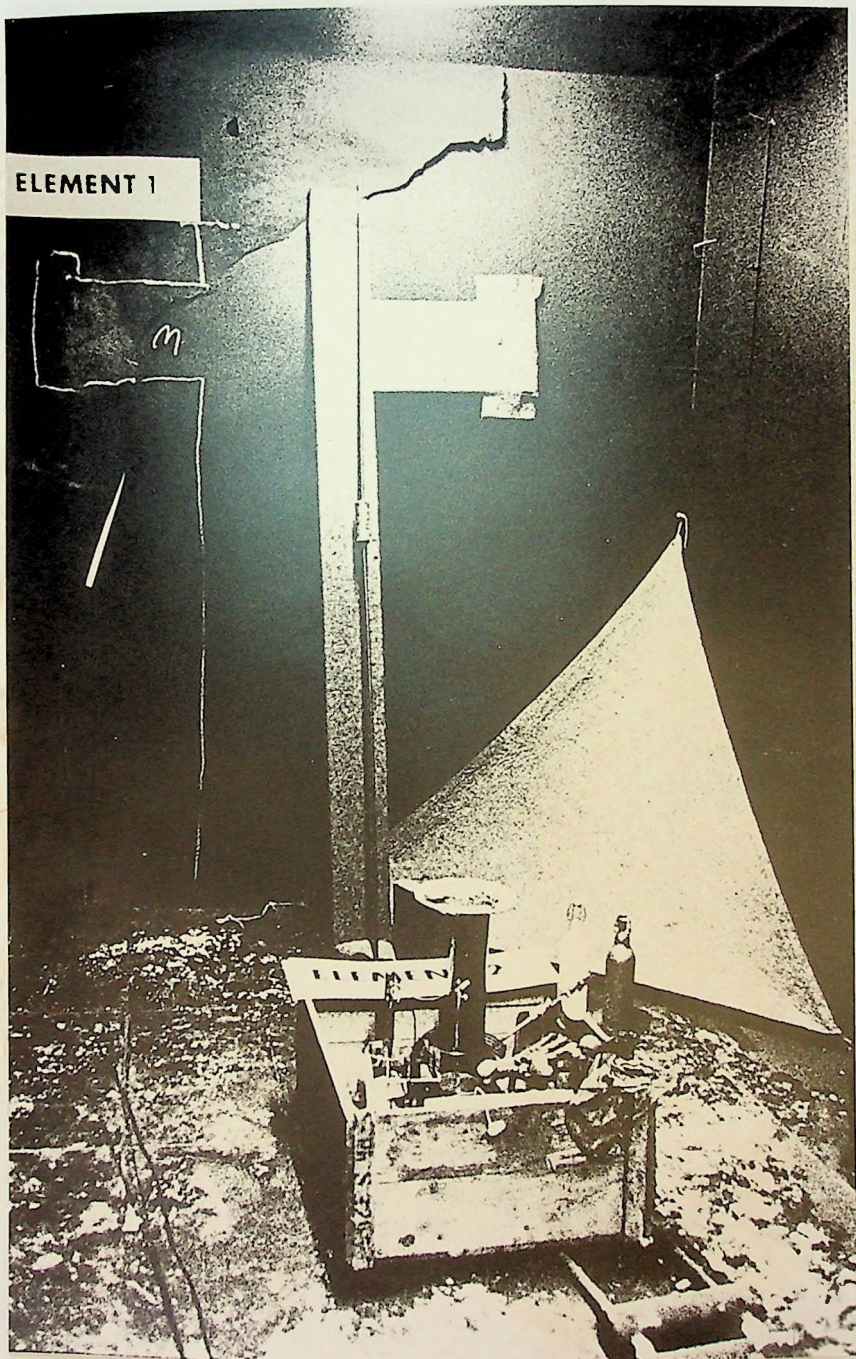


FIGURE 5



FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7



FIGURE 8



FIGURE 9



FIGURE 10



FIGURE 11

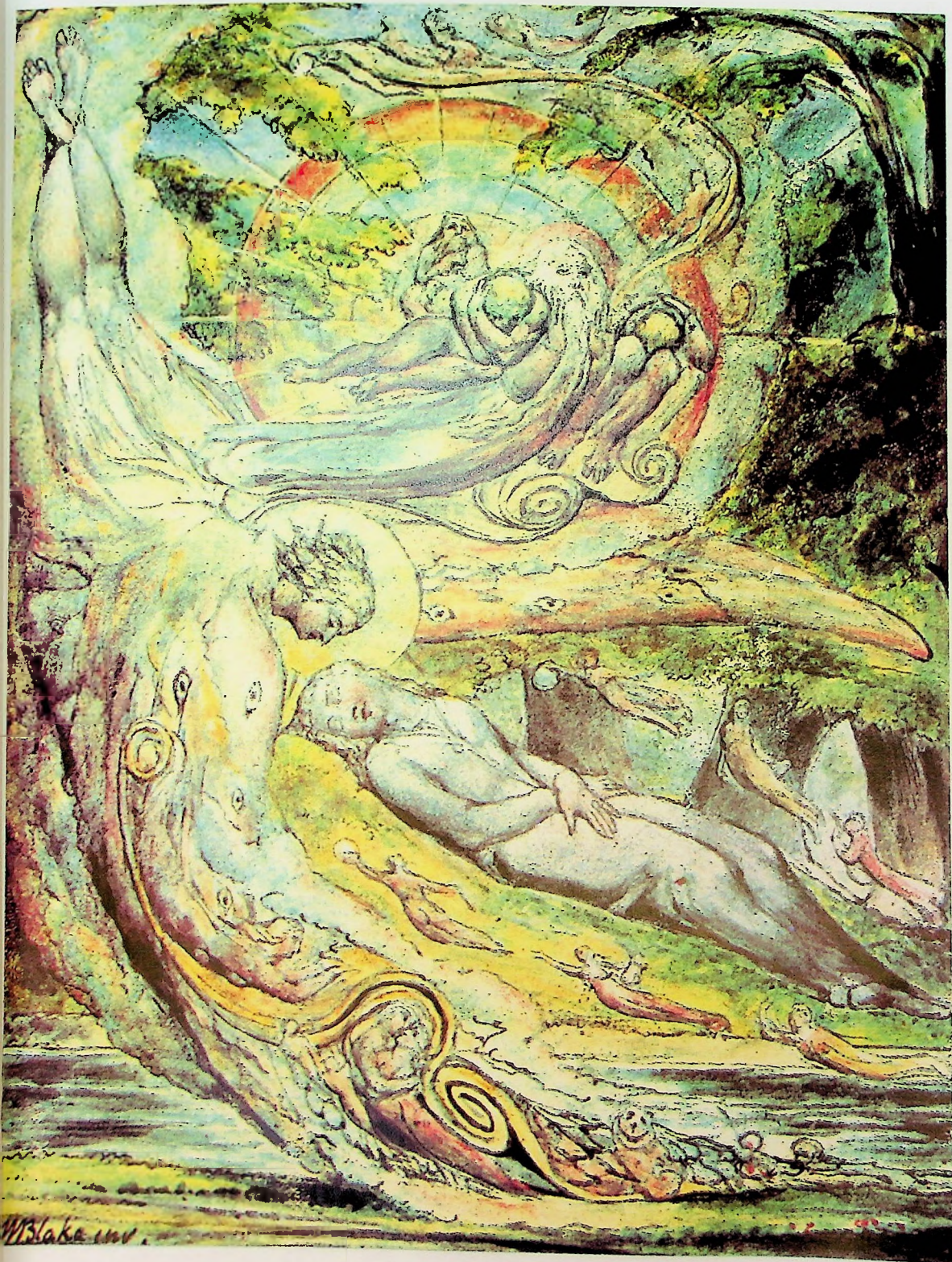


FIGURE 12



FIGURE 13

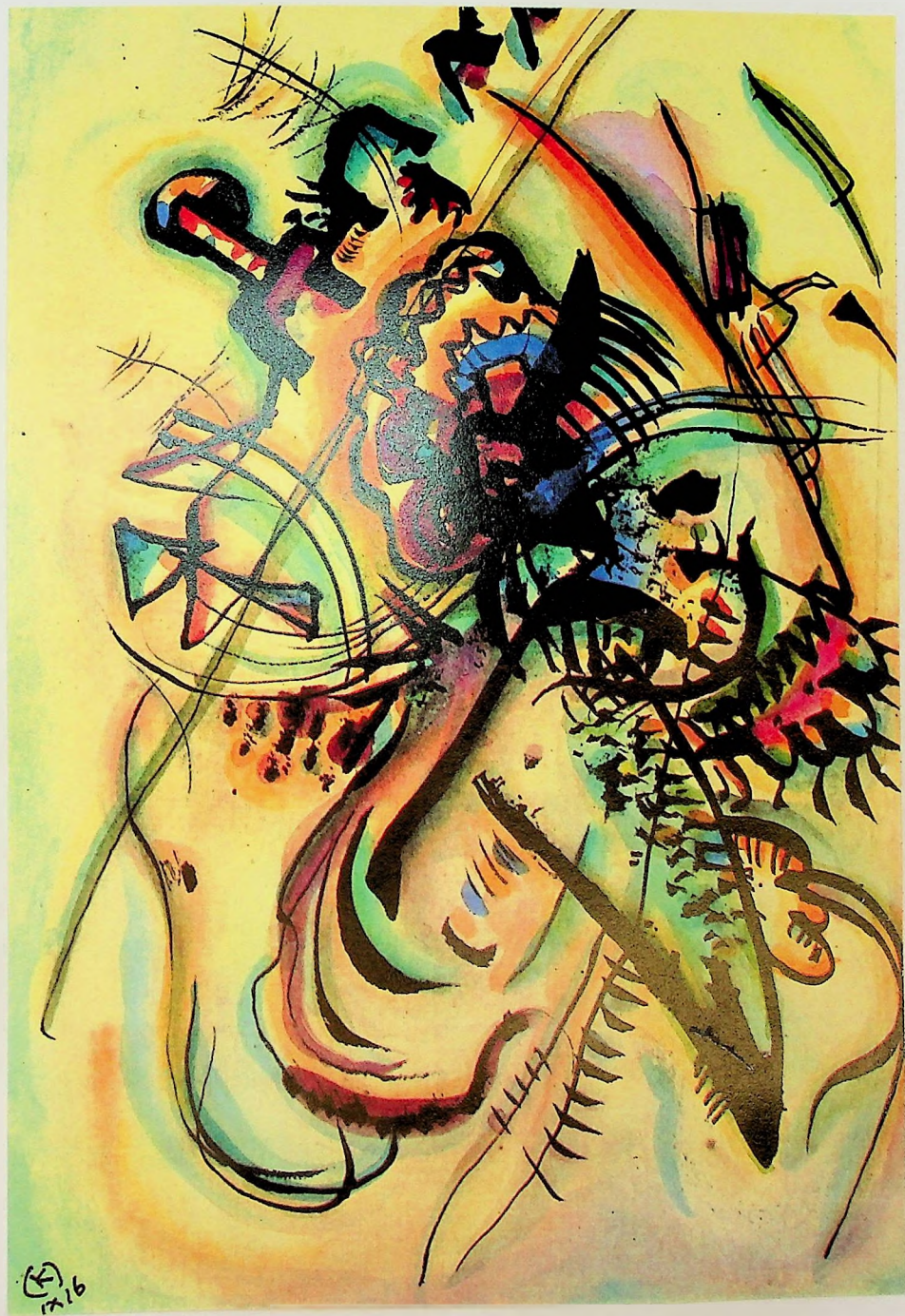


FIGURE 15



FIGURE 16

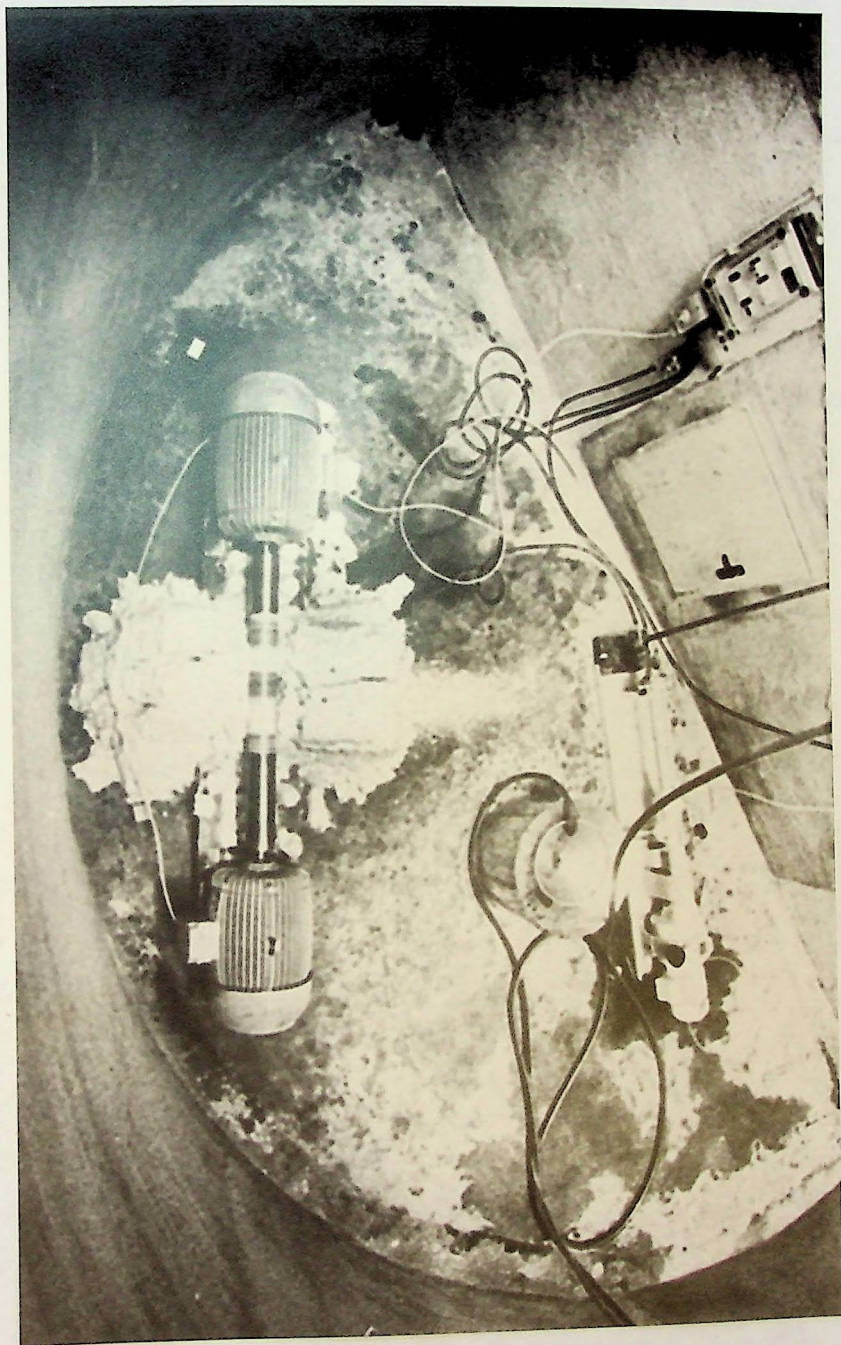


FIGURE 17

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Beuys worked primarily as a conceptual artist, although having been aware of him in the past, I have always found his work rather remote and unappealing on a more immediate visual level.

Having transcended that barrier earlier this year by finding time to make a more in-depth investigation, I discovered that in the abundant information on him, his work and socio-political ideas, little time had been given to an investigation into the possible origins of his metaphysical persuasions which gives the impression that he was in fact a unique and highly original thinker, thus serving to perpetuate and even reinforce the 'Beuys cult' or myth of origin.

Having read a little about Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Rudolph Steiner, it was obvious that there were similarities in their concerns, and this is the basic aim of this study: to attempt to uncover much of the history which is manifest in Beuys, and particularly his relationship to Steiner.

German romantic philosophers laid the aesthetic and philosophical foundation from which much modern art, particularly expressionism, evolved. However, relating these two large and complex cultural movements to each other and then to the work of Beuys is not as straightforward as it may appear, given that all three are notoriously hard to define and, in the last analysis, defy compartmentalization.

At the risk of becoming nebulous in such a brief study, I believe it has been possible to trace certain threads in the Germanic romantic spirit, expressed particularly through painting rather than sculpture, from the nature mysticism of Jacob Bohme and Meister Eckhart to Goethe and the heyday of romanticism. This european mystical tradition became cross fertilised with eastern mystical philosophy, as in theosophy, which in turn has had a great bearing on the anthroposophy of Rudolph Steiner, which I believe had a profound influence on Joseph Beuys, and which, to my knowledge, has never adequately been given credit.

The subject of romanticism in relation to Beuys would lend itself well to a study of nationalism in relation to art and philosophy and its implications before and after the war, but this has not been my main concern here. Instead, I have tried to come to an understanding of the esoteric spiritual and metaphysical concerns of the Germanic people as is expressed through philosophy and art, and how, coming from a land surrounded and absorbed by increasing industrialisation and mechanisation, has found its alternative in a profound respect for nature.

German mystical thought in general has been opposed to the materialist's view point, and this has culminated in the angst and idealistic aspirations of Beuys who, despite my detractions of him as an exponent of second hand ideas, remains an original artist, perhaps an unwitting subscriber to tradition and a romantic 'in extremis'.

CHAPTER I

THE CENTRAL THEMES IN BEUYS' PERFORMANCES

In order to define the fundamental concepts present in Beuys' work, aspects of his personal history and seminal influences need to be recognised. Joseph Beuys was born in Kleve in north west Germany. He was to become one of, if not the most, significant figures of contemporary German art, a hero of both the avant-garde and the mass media simultaneously.

While still a teenager he was temporarily involved with the Hitler Youth movement and subsequently took part in the Star March to Nuremberg. At this time he also became acquainted with a sculptor, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, a so-called "degenerate artist", who gave him his "first true feeling for the sculptural arts".(1) He had a keen interest in the natural sciences and intended to begin studying medicine, but was drafted into military service and trained as a dive bomber pilot. This resulted in him supposedly being shot down somewhere over Southern Russia in a snowstorm, and having his life saved by a Tartars, who found him after a couple of days, unconscious in the snow. They covered him in badger fat, then wrapped him in felt from their tents to regenerate warmth. By the end of the war he had been severely injured a number of times and had been taken prisoner by the British. He had also by now been introduced to the anthroposophical concepts of Rudolph Steiner by a friend, Fritz Rolf Rothenburg, who died during the war. These experiences were to

play a major role in Beuys' later life as artist and cult figure, but in the meantime he decided to dedicate himself fully to his interest in the arts. While studying the natural sciences, he went on to train as a sculptor at the Federal Academy of Art in Dusseldorf.

After finishing his studies, which were largely based on a sensitivity for materials, he worked on a number of small commissions for private patrons, and at this stage experienced a couple of years dominated by depression, of which he states "The things inside of myself had to transform completely; a transformation reaching as far as the psyche had to take place, illnesses are almost always spiritual crises in life as well". (2)

After working on a farm to recuperate, he took up a teaching position in the Academy of Art at Dusseldorf, and this is where he produced his first significant pieces of work, using fat.

"Fat was a great discovery for me ... I was able to influence it with heat and cold ... in this way I could transform the character of this fat from a chaotic and unsettled state to a very solid condition of form. In this way the fat underwent a movement from a very chaotic condition to a geometrical context as its end. I thus had three fields of power and, there, that was the idea of sculpture. It was power over a condition of chaos, over a condition of movement, and over a condition of form. In these three elements - form, movement

and chaos, was the indeterminate energy from which I derived my complete theory of sculpture, of the psychology of humanity as the power of will, the power of thought, and the power of feeling, and there I found it - the schema adequate to understanding all the problems of society".(3)

In 'fat chair' (fig. 1) the chair representing the human anatomy supports the fat in the position of digestive, excretive and sexual function - processes involving transformation.

The fat, when carried on to a psychological level can, in one extreme, symbolise the 'flowing chaotic warmth' of willpower, or else a cold and overly intellectual, or 'crystalline' state. In 'fat corner' (fig. 2) the use of the corner represents the mechanistic tendency of the human mind, as expressed in buildings and cities, all founded on combinations of the right angle. The fat placed into a corner challenges this metaphor by being absorbed into the walls and so defying the physical boundaries of the corner. In my opinion the metaphors and underlying philosophy of the use of fat, in this as well as many other pieces, owes much to the science of 'morphology' of Goethe and the retreat from reason of the romantic philosophers. The preoccupation with an attempt at balancing the psychological counterparts of 'thinking, feeling and willing' is directly attributable to the writings of Steiner, himself also a great follower of Goethe's quasi scientific speculations, particularly his methods of achieving deep insight through contemplation of a natural object.

Beuys became involved with the 'neo-Dada' Fluxus organisation. Although their intentions may not have been as clear, it brought him into close contact with people dedicated to breaking the boundaries between art and life, and between the various arts. He was particularly influenced by the presence of many musicians, (John Cage, Terry Rieley, Stockhausen), and his first 'action', 'Siberian Symphony' (fig. 3) involved a piano connected to a dead rabbit by means of electric wires. This was among the first pieces which attempt a directly spiritual intention. 'Siberian' possibly represented a spiritual utopia in its remoteness from civilization, and the elements of life and death are introduced by the rabbit.

A couple of years later came 'How to explain pictures to a dead hare'. (fig. 4) Beuys, with his head covered in honey and goldleaf, carried the hare in his arms and while having a sheet of iron tied to one foot and a piece of felt on the other. He walked around the gallery explaining the various aesthetic theories of the different art works around the space. This was Beuys' first 'action' that really caught the imagination of the public, being a highly resonant image in various ways. The 'mask' of honey and gold had an obvious connection with thinking or consciousness, gold suggesting transformation as in alchemy, and honey being another transformed substance is 'alive' or 'spiritualised', according to Steiner amongst others, suggesting a transformation of consciousness. The iron or 'heavy masculine' symbol in contact with the ground was contrasted on the other foot by absorbing or insulating felt.

The 'explaining' raised questions about life and death, and about the problems of communication in relation to other spiritual entities (animals) brought to the extreme in the dead hare, which also has many mythological associations in terms of the spirit world.

'Manresa' (fig. 5) was another 'action' centered around the belief that intuition is the higher form of reason, that it opens up levels of perception and understanding that go beyond rational analysis. The relationship between reason and intuition is of key importance for an understanding of Beuys' works.

His definition of reason is that it "finds its limitation at the conclusion of the thought process"(4). Thinking is a rigidly crystallised activity, limited in its effectiveness and "confined to rationalism"(5) whereas intuition is an extension of this limited form of thinking by the fact that it can transcend time.

This is ascribed to the belief of various mystics and clairvoyants, Steiner included, that once higher forms of thought are penetrated, the concept of 'time travel' becomes possible in the spiritual domain; time is of course the great flux. If one looks at Beuys' work as a whole it becomes apparent that the anthropological undercurrent in his work is an investigation into the possibilities of transcending cultural history and the immediate limitations that have been set upon us by accepting logical or quantitative thought which "fossilises within its own limits".(6)

Challenging conventional perceptions of communication and time were also central to 'The Chief' (fig. 6). In this performance Beuys spent nine hours wrapped in a roll of felt with a dead hare at each end. Also present was a long strip of fat and a fat corner, a roll of felt wrapped around a copper rod, an amplifier and speaker which emitted non-meaningful sounds from Beuys in the felt.

Again the primal sounds were intended to transcend time, an attempt to "switch off from my own species' range of semantics".(7)

This meditative piece, along with '24 hours ... and in us ... under us ... landunder' (fig. 7), were directed to the potential ability to develop perceptions of time and space that go beyond those which have been proven by Einstein, suggesting a development of higher perceptions based on the synthesis of scientific knowledge and instinctive or 'spiritual perception', and became the theme of many of his later lectures, including 'Energy plan for Western Man'.

Although Beuys has never openly identified with Steiner, it becomes apparent that there are, in fact, numerous parallels not only and maybe superficially in the specific materials of individual pieces, such as horns, honey, wax, corners, plant parts, cosmic energies and various animal parts in general, but more importantly his spiritual philosophy is in total keeping with that of Steiner, to the point of Paraphrase in some incidences.

One of the key factors of Steiner's mysticism is the spiritual need for going beyond or transcending the senses and the material world view. He also shares with Beuys the conviction that art and science cannot and should not be divided, and a belief that "art must realise that its task is to carry the spiritual-divine life into the earthly". (8)

The concept of art as teaching is also a view which is directly attributable to the German romantics, particularly Schiller. Beuys' concept of the 'free international university' is highly reminiscent of Steiner's 'Goetheanum' at Dornach, where anthroposophical studies were being applied to medicine, education and agriculture. Beuys' view of his expanded concept of art is strikingly similar to Steiner's reason for leaving the Theosophists and setting up the Anthroposophical Society. "I found I had very little in common with the art world in general. Perhaps this was still the after effect of my studies in natural science, but I felt that art was at its richest when the laboratory spirit of research, scientific results and a clear theoretical structure was there to extend it to a wider understanding". (9)

In Beuys' work and persona there are many uncanny parallels and preoccupations which are deeply rooted in the romantic spirit. These shall be given further attention, but first it is necessary to give further attention to the definition of the other fundamental concepts to be found in Beuys' work.

'Eurasia, 34th section of the Siberian Symphony' (fig. 8) was an 'action' with its main concern focused on the potential split between Eastern and Western philosophical outlooks. Once again the hare represented a nomadic spirit, free to traverse the open planes of Europe and Asia. During the scenario Beuys recited fragments of German romantic poetry and the Eurasian staff made its first appearance. The staff was laid down in an east-west orientation, one end doubling back towards the east, in this way suggesting the link between the eastern capacity for transcendental thought and western materialism; the idea being that if the two abilities were united in some way, the split between intuition and reason would be overcome.

Beuys is by no means the first artist to stress his belief in the significance of intuition as a cognitive force transcending the boundaries of reason, the visible world, which is said to conceal the 'real' world of spirit. This belief system is epitomised by the various manifestations of mysticism; particularly eastern mysticism which in turn has been utilised and expanded upon by strong traditions of occult and esoteric mystic groups, concentrated particularly in the geographical area with which Beuys seems to have a deep and ongoing relationship, even to the extent of dying and being reborn here, in a sense, in the war. Eurasia, from oriental Russia to Germanic central Europe is a distinctly rich region in its tendency toward a passionate yet deeply philosophical aspiration to the metaphysical.

This 'romantic longing' for a beyond, for an escape from an increasingly materialistic world view, from the 'crystalline',

rational scientific conception of reality, has been supported by the 'nature mysticism' of Bohme, Ekhart, Novalis and Goethe. This preoccupation is also strongly evident in the work of Beuys, not necessarily because he may have been directly influenced by their individual legacies, but possibly because he is also German, so the initial angst may owe something to Germany undergoing a rapid industrialisation and a high degree of efficiency in its economic systems. In short, the epitome of western materialism, occurring in the centre of Europe, with little room for relief except perhaps up, toward higher, metaphysical planes.

Beuys' pantheistic view of nature is expressed in his early interest in biology and botany. This quickly develops into a more spiritualised concern, expressed through his drawings which have a hovering, almost mediumistic quality, that perhaps convey the mood in which they were made.

This is particularly evident when the drawings have to do with death or with animals, the hare, stag, swan and horse are invested with special powers, representing an incarnation of the soul or as the earthly form of spiritual beings which have access to 'other' regions. This theme was also given much attention in the paintings of Franz Marc and Paul Klee who will be discussed in the following chapter.

Throughout much of Beuys' work, which gradually becomes more a vehicle for political ideas, rather than being ends in themselves, he

consciously takes on the role of shaman, as mediator between the visible and invisible.

"I like America and America likes me" (figs. 9 and 10) was a performance where four days were spent interacting with a coyote in a New York gallery. Beuys travelled from the airport in an ambulance, he was wrapped in felt and carried on a stretcher. The felt was used to insulate him from unwanted American influences; the ambulance and stretcher signified the "traumatised" condition of modern man in need of spiritual communion; the coyote, once sacred to the American Indians, is now persecuted by the white man.

"24 hours ... and in us ... under us ... landunder", the Celtic Kinloch Rannoch Scottish Symphony; his "bog" action, stag hunt and the previously mentioned performances, whilst dealing individually with various concerns, when viewed as a whole might seem like fragments of a grandiose effort at social therapy.

"When people say that shamanistic practice is atavistic and irrational, one might answer that the attitude of contemporary scientists is equally old-fashioned and atavistic, because we should by now be at another stage of development in our relationship to material. So when I appear as a kind of shamanistic figure, or allude to it, I do it to stress my belief in other priorities and the need to come up with a completely different plan for working with substances, for instance, in places like universities where everyone speaks so rationally, it is necessary for a kind of enchanter to appear." (10)

This much publicised aspect of Beuys' art and persona, the two often being indistinguishable, has another side to it. His adoption of the role of healer, his emphasis on spiritual development and his almost fanatical concern to free people for such a development, harks back to the position Steiner had in society. The belief that creativity can lead to the realisation of self and ultimately world renewal, as in the case of Steiner, generates an unavoidable contradiction. By using his spiritual 'teaching' to elevate himself to 'guru' status, Beuys also becomes the contradiction between the spiritual and the material. Both men are perhaps deserving of much criticism on this fundamental issue, but Beuys seems able to ignore this aspect of himself in his romantic quest for 'extreme individuality', and in fact states that one of the elements of 'The Chief' was "how to become a revolutionary".(11) In fact, Beuys seems to have been so concerned with the designing of his own personality that he may well be guilty of fabricating aspects of his past.

In a possible attempt to free himself from his Germanness, as a short cut to coming to terms with the period of history associated with Nazism, it has been speculated that the whole scenario about the plane crash, rescue and subsequent adoption by nomadic tartars may have been an extremely well calculated hoax; he quotes the Tartars as saying "Du nix Njemcki, du Tartar" (You are not German, you Tartar). This myth, were it true, might serve to dislocate him psychologically from any participation in the war. But this itself, I feel, is another contradiction by the fact that his powerful motivation towards autonomy is in fact a counterpart of the very essence of the

German romantic spirit, and was played upon by the Nazis to evoke strong feelings of nationalism and righteousness.

To some romantic philosophers, particularly Schlegel, originality was of paramount importance, even to the extent that morality could be sacrificed to achieve this end. Although this is not my main concern here, it could be construed that Beuys is of this psychological type, although in a wholly non-violent way. It is also interesting to note that the early German romantics actively set out to try and create a new system of mythology which would act as a source of inspiration for artists, poets and painters of the day.

Beuys' conception of art as spiritual alchemy, his use of alchemical material, describes his concern with transformation. His remark that "it is the transformation of substance that is my main concern in art"(12) is a direct continuation of the idealistic intention of such artists as Kandinsky and Mondrian, who also took a great interest in the writings of Steiner and Mme Blavatsky. In this context, Beuys can be considered to be an expressionist in no uncertain terms. This point will be clarified further in the following chapters, as will a more precise definition of the romantic spirit and how it has manifested itself throughout modernist Germanic art.

CHAPTER I - FOOTNOTES

1. All, Artforum "Joseph Beuys a Private Collection" Munchen 1990 p. 15.
2. Tisdall, Caroline "Joseph Beuys" Thames and Hudson, London 1979, p. 63.
4. IBID, p. 72.
5. IBID, p. 94.
6. IBID, p. 110.
7. IBID, p. 95.
8. Kuspit, Donald B. "Beuys Fat Felt and Alchemy", Art in America May 1980, p. 86.
9. Tisdall, Caroline, "Joseph Beuys" Thames and Hudson, London 1979, p. 76.
10. IBID, p. 23.
11. Kuspit, Donald B. "Beuys Fat Felt and Alchemy", Art in America May 1980, p. 84.
12. Tisdall, Caroline, "Joseph Beuys" Thames and Hudson, London 1979, p. 30.

CHAPTER II

ANTHROPOSOLOGY AND THEOSOPHY - AN OUTLINE

The similarities between Beuys' allusions to the role of shaman as spiritual healer and communicator with spiritual realms, and Rudolph Steiner's self appointed role as 'scientist of the invisible', clairvoyant and spiritual teacher, will become more evident if a closer examination is made of anthroposophy, its basic teaching and aims.

Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925) although not widely known in the British Isles, had, and still has, a marked influence in many aspects of modern life, particularly in Germany. His teachings are largely derived from Goethe's idealism and scientific studies, also from the various teachings of the Theosophical Society, which Steiner lead for a short time before founding his own anthroposophical movement. He claimed to have perceived spiritual worlds through heightened powers of cognition: taking the lead from Goethe's 'objective idealism' Steiner maintained that reality is made up of several levels or super sensible, spiritual realities.

Goethe seems to have transcended the boundaries of rational thought by concentration on natural phenomena, and by so doing made cognitive leaps into new areas of discovery about the natural world.

Steiner, who had been given the task of editing Goethe's entire scientific work, suggests techniques for developing the necessary faculties of clear thinking by which 'knowledge of higher worlds may

be achieved'. The successive stages are 'Imagination, Inspiration and Intuition'. On entering the initiation stage, the student experiences the equivalent of a spiritual death and rebirth experience! This more than adequately describes not only the plane crash and rescue, but also Beuys' on-going preoccupation with a spiritual rebirth.

The term 'anthroposophy' is meant to stand in pointed contrast to theosophy, which was founded in 1875 by Helena P. Blavatsky and Colonel Henry Steel Olcott and was primarily devoted to the promotion of occult teachings in modern times, particularly the esotericism of oriental religions and philosophies.

The society was of prime importance to the development of symbolism, expressionism and surrealism. Blavatsky's 'secret doctrine' presents a speculative mixture of western occult traditions (hermeticism, gnosticism, neo-platonism and others) with Buddhism and Hinduism particularly. Steiner became the invited leader of the Society, and stayed for only a short time, due to certain fundamental disagreements. He claimed to have discovered a relationship between scientific thinking and spiritual thinking, and maintained that occult knowledge should be justifiable by 'a' not 'the' scientific way of thought. He felt it necessary to set up the Anthroposophical Society, not as an association of his followers, but as an active body, dedicated to the rediscovery of higher powers of perception, and to apply this 'spiritual science' to all aspects of human life and thought. "In a practical way, to lead mankind into a new understanding of man and the universe".(1)

This was necessary because he felt that modern materialist, scientific thought was having a corrosive effect on our relationship to each other and the environment in general. He predicted that western civilisation would lead an increasingly unbalanced life due to a one-sided 'cult of the intellect', that the spiritual counterparts of feeling and willing were not adequately being taken into account, and that this would lead to a great increase in mental instability.

As previously mentioned, Steiner and his fellow anthroposophists build the Goetheanum as a laboratory for the application of this 'spiritual science' to various field of study such as agriculture, medicine and education. Many lectures were given to specialists in these fields, and some interesting results were achieved, i.e. bio-dynamic farming, Waldorf education and the Camphill communities for the mentally handicapped. The crucial element in the last two applications, and indeed to human spiritual development as a whole, are his lengthy speculations on the powers of thinking, feeling and willing. These basic components are also used by Beuys as the foundation of his 'Theory of Sculpture' and went on to be formulated into the 'Energy Plan for Western Man'.

Steiner's basic premise was that these three elements are the active elements in our souls or etheric bodies and that these correspond to the head, limbs and chest in that order, that "thinking always contains a small amount of feeling and willing, that feeling contains a small amount of thinking and willing, that willing contains a small amount of feeling and thinking. Feeling in thought contains the

karmic outcome of past lives on earth, the thinking and willing of the life of feeling, karmically determine our character, and the thinking and feeling of our will is what disconnects us in our present earthly lives, from karmic connections".(2)

Of these theories, derived largely from eastern mysticism, Steiner stresses the need to understand and exercise conscious control of the will; that this would lift man's thinking to a higher level, which would enable him to co-operate more consciously between the powers of thinking, feeling and willing.

This quasi scientific approach to metaphysical concerns demonstrates, to a degree, the attempt by Steiner to bridge the gap between occult and materialist attitudes. The notions of a higher level of thought are derived from eastern and romantic sources. To examine further how these have influenced Germanic art through to Joseph Beuys it will help to have a historically based account.

CHAPTER II - FOOTNOTES

1. de Fouw, Remco "The Spiritual Science of Rudolph Steiner" Thesis, May 1990, p. 11.
2. Parmer, Otto "Rudolph Steiner on his book The Philosophy of Freedom", Anthroposophic Press, New York 1975, p.83

CHAPTER III

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN GERMANY

Romanticism in Germany was influenced to a degree by current trends of thought from England, France and Spain, but it was through its own indigenous sources, the writings of Goethe, Lenz, Schiller, Schelling, Novalis and others that it can be said to have begun in the last decade of the 18th century.

The philosophical speculation of Kant made a great impact on romantic philosophy, and although frequently misinterpreted, it remains the basis of much romantic thought.

Three of Kant's main theories help to demonstrate how this developed; he shows that the human mind is not just a passive receiver of exterior influences, but also has the capacity for creative knowledge. He proposed that we have no direct, complete, absolute knowledge, because the mind works according to its own laws and so influences any knowledge we acquire. We do not know reality as it is in itself but only as it appears to us. For the romantics, Kant's emphasis on the function of the mind proved to be an enormous liberation. Thinking in a sense became freed from all constraints and could now be used without reservations to achieve whatever was desirable.

Although this was a rather one sided interpretation of Kant, it had the result of producing subsequent philosophical systems which regarded thought as a directly creative activity, and of it even

being possible to create a new 'reality' whereby man could do whatever he or she liked.

"The organs of thinking are the creative organs of the world - the sexual organs of nature". Novalis(1) Following philosophers paid lip-service to Kant, but their claim was to have discovered a fundamental core of reality which can be known directly and absolutely and that now metaphysical systems could be built on this. Post-Kantian thinkers were mainly concerned with the powers which had been suppressed by the 'Age of Reason' in which scientists tried to discover laws which connect cause and effect, epitomised by Newton's concept of the universe as a mechanical, clockwork-like entity, where every occurrence or phenomenon could be represented by a mathematical equation, in other words, the age more and more of 'reality' as opposed to the imaginative or fantastic.

The romantic movement was a quest for wonders, notions that the physical world was permeated or surrounded by mysteries, that the world apprehended through the senses, concealed or half revealed signs of something beyond.

Encouraged by this post-Kantian idealism was also an increasing interest in hypnotism, visions, manifestations of the unconscious, the occult in general and eastern philosophies, although little information was available on these at the time.

It was felt that the world of man might have a more intimate relationship with the world of minerals, rocks and plants. These feelings of mystery gave rise to a feeling of religious awe, as in

Novalis and Eichendorff, and also Goethe, who was probably the last European to attempt the many-sidedness of the great renaissance personalities as critic, journalist, painter, statesman, poet and natural philosopher.

Much of his scientific work on colour was an attempt to disprove Newton's theories. He was also a keen botanist, having numerous insights and discoveries which is not unusual in itself, although his method of intense concentration on natural phenomena and consequent arrival at a hypothesis, is.

He claimed to let his 'knowledge of self' develop into a 'knowledge of the world' and through his own mental perceptions (unscientific in the conventional sense) came to found his 'morphology', the science of formation and transformation, to be found throughout the organic and inorganic world, also in cultural phenomena, something which Beuys was later to use as a key concept in his sculptural theories.

The first romantics were of course all individuals therefore it can be difficult to sum up a trend as such, but it would appear that there were two basic lines of thought, one of which was a more systematic philosophy and could be said to have begun with Fichte and culminate in Hegel. The other was more ascribable to the first romantics, particularly Schlegel, Novalis, Tieck and Schleiermacher, who developed a special and distinctive kind of philosophical thought in their literary works. This more basic philosophy is an expression of everything which distinguishes the romantic from other attitudes, it consists of four basic trends, and could almost serve as a definition of the term 'romantic'.

1. The flight from necessity.

As a reaction to the age of reason, free rein was given to the emotions and instincts, to the mysterious and mystical, without a need for justification, but this disregard of necessity contains a romantic irony. A flight from the 'real world,' of its laws and restrictions became a flight from reality, and as the finite became insignificant when confronted with infinity, it allowed the romantics to dismiss anything they did not want to take seriously.

2. Extreme individualism

For some romantic philosophers, particularly Schlegel, originality can be proved by eccentricity even to the point of monstrosity. As long as one's actions are original they are justified and have their value, and here Kant's original hypothesis is perverted.

Morality is sacrificed in order to make the ego different from all others. The ideal of humanity is destroyed and the philosopher can now be so arbitrary that he can dismiss all moral and social obligations. This has its obvious and ominous implications. It is hard to see how such distorted idealisation can pass as philosophy, but it seems to be a recurrent concept throughout romanticism.

3. Concentration of feelings and emotions

One of the main characteristics is a tendency to want to feel for the sake of feeling, the ideal being to live in a constant mood, even at the price of falling into sentimentality.

Romantic yearning can lead to the invention of aims which cannot be reached. This emotion, usually called romantic love, is often an unhappy love by the fact that it is a love of being in love and can result in the projection of preconceived qualities in order to increase pleasure or pain.

4. The acceptance of certain expressions at their face value.

This can be demonstrated by the fact that the previous stance on feeling and emotion could be included in philosophy without the actual nature of these being discussed.

Also, the tendency of romantics to use words and symbols as magic formulae to create or preserve emotions often perverted their real meaning. This trend has been used to evoke pride and patriotism, but later romantics such as Schelling and Schlegel did not let their nationalistic ideas dominate their main concern, which was the basic idea of nature being visible spirit and spirit being invisible nature. This allowed them to explain everything either by opposing nature and spirit to each other, or by combining them in different ways. These are the kind of equations which Steiner was to capitalise on.

Hegel went on to develop these methods to their ultimate conclusion by gradually leading to a full transformation of the world into pure spirit - that all exists as a self realisation of spirit. But, by establishing idealism as the conclusion of all philosophy and without establishing obligations, his method can be used to serve individual inclinations and, in Russia, contributed to the founding of marxism,

a new romanticism which was built upon the more mystical aspect, then greatly influenced by eastern teaching, which in turn influenced the avant-garde at the turn of the 19th century.

The romantic movement was characterised as 'an aspiration towards the infinite' (2). This theme was obviously conducive to the arts.

Romanticism by way of a reactionary movement shares much with expressionism by the fact that it sought an alternative to a growing conservatism and rigid social order. Germany did not exist as a united state until 1871, at this time it underwent rapid industrialisation and consequently, social change. This increasing conservatism was also reflected in the arts, but through some artists, who rejected neo-classicism, painting became a vehicle for deep spiritual and philosophic expression. "The great epoch of the spiritual which is already beginning, or in embryonic form began yesterday ... provides and will provide the soil in which a kind of monumental work of art must come to fruition". Kandinsky (3)

The German need for metaphysics found its visual expression in the work of Caspar David Friedrich and Philipp Otto Runge.

'A monk by the sea' (fig. 11) one of Friedrich's most famous paintings, expresses the search for divinity outside of the church. The lonely figure seems confronted by the overwhelming and incomprehensible immensity of the universe. Raising much controversy when first exhibited, the painting attempts to deal with the dilemma

faced by many romantic artists, of how to express experiences of the spiritual or transcendental without referring to this crucifixion or resurrection. This had been attempted before by the German mystic Jakob Boehme in the early 17th century who formulated a highly original account of God and creation. Anticipating much mystical thought in Germany by several decades, he ran into much hostility from Lutheran authorities, but was later to receive scrupulous attention from Hegel, Schelling and Schopenhauer and many subsequent artists including to a large extent Runge, who was particularly influenced by his flower and plant mysticism.

Runge painted flowers and flower spirits as infant children, possibly because of the fact that flowers express in a clear way an archetypal or primal quality. Turner in England was also trying to express nature's primordial elements of light, energy and elemental matter, and managed to paint sunlight with a quasi-religious intensity.

Friedrich and Turner amongst others were trying to develop new symbols of religious expression, largely due to a certain dissatisfaction with orthodox religious systems. They attempted this through a particularly intense absorption of certain aspects of a natural scene. Blake is also a prime example of a new system maker (fig. 12) being dissatisfied with the petty, worldly traditions of patronage and academic training. He had a fascination with images of primal power and thought of himself as being more universal in his art and ideas. Working with symbols and the realms of the spirit Blake was also influenced by Bohme, but as is the case with so many a romantic artist, by attempting the universal he achieved a rather

esoteric illustration of space and time. This would appear to be an inherent predicament, one which is raised again and again throughout romantic thought and to a degree is reiterated in the art of Joseph Beuys.

After the initial heyday of romanticism, it receded into the undercurrents of northern european art. The archetypal flower of Goethe's botanical research remained blooming, in a sense. The search for the supernatural in the details of nature fuelled the imaginations of many artists who could loosely be categorised under the heading of expressionism.

CHAPTER III - FOOTNOTES

1. Praver, Siegbert "The Romantic Period in Germany" Univeresity Institute of Germanic Studies, London 1970, p. 238.
2. Rosenblum, Robert "Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition" Thames and Hudson, London 1975, p. 73.
3. Tuchman, Maurice; Freeman, Judi "The Spiritual in Art Abstract Painting 1890 1985" L.A. County Museum of Art, Abbeville Press, New York 1986, p.193.

CHAPTER IV

EXPRESSIONISM AND MYSTICISM

As with romanticism, expressionism does not denote a systematic philosophy nor in terms of art, a unified style, but rather an attitude to life and the universe; a way of thinking which strongly connects such artists as Nolde, Marc, Palmer, van Gogh, Klee, Mondrian, Kandinsky, Beuys and some Russian artists, who all seemed to feel the hypocrisy of middle class materialism. As a reaction to this they continued the romantic preoccupations with universal ultimates through a variety of means.

Artists like Marc perpetuated the tradition of romantic empathy, the preoccupation remained, but the metaphor changed from landscape to human to animal.

Marc and Klee, and later Beuys, sought to evoke the mysteriousness of animals, and although romanticism filtered through into many interpretations, it never really became obscured. It found a more concentrated expression in the work of Mondrian and Kandinsky. In fact, Mondrian's early paintings were very like Friedrich's paintings of ships. Mondrian also began to look beyond conventional religious belief, toward concepts of the metaphysical in the theosophical writings of Blavatsky and Steiner.

Kandinsky, having come from Russia to Germany, had been an active spokesman for Russia's peculiar blend of German romanticism and

eastern mysticism which gave much inspiration to the avant-garde centered around St. Petersburg at the time.

Like Beuys, Mondrian seems to have closely followed Steiner's speculations about how plant life mirrors the macrocosm, which in turn owes much to the ideas of Goethe. Just as Runge's studies of plants and flowers paralleled Goethe's and also Bohme's ideas about flowers as reflections of life forces, so did Mondrian's flowers and plants owe much to the neo-romantic botany of Steiner, who ascribed them as belonging to a more fully encompassing structure.

Mondrian, who became a member of the Dutch Theosophical Society in 1909, was of the opinion that one could obtain higher knowledge within visual reality, a view that Steiner had expressed during his lectures in the Netherlands in 1908. The booklet in which these lectures were published was treasured by Mondrian for the rest of his life. Like Mondrian, Kandinsky followed with great interest the writing of Steiner, who then headed the theosophist movement. This seemed able to provide for them ideas of spiritual worlds that superceded the realm of terrestrial matter, but also gave them specific iconographical clues to describe symbolically this invisible domain.

Kandinsky while in Russia was exposed to romantic trends and in the context of Wagner's opera 'Lohengrin' wrote "it seemed to me to be the complete realisation of my fairytale Moscow ... mentally I saw all my colours, they stood before my eyes. Frenzied, almost insane lines drew themselves before me." (1)

In the creative richness and diversity of the Russian avant-garde before and around the cultural revolution of 1917 there was a broad, somewhat nebulous, constellation of artists like Kandinsky, Malevich, Redchenko, Matiushin, Tatlin and Gabo amongst others, who broadly speaking, but quite definitely, had been exposed to the teachings and practices of numerous mystical and occult groups as well as German romanticism in Russia at the turn of the century. The symbolists appearance concided with a growing tendency to document and research primitive and oriental cultures.

There was an aspiration to create a new language of expression. Anticipating Beuys, the symbolists discussed the therapeutic potential of art as well as the opinion that intuition, not objective knowledge, pointed the way toward illumination or a deeper perception.

They maintained the metaphysical aspirations of romanticism and referred to themselves as mystics in no uncertain terms, but it must be said that they also took inspiration from spontaneity and gesture as well as from the accidental visual structures of root and trees, which were translated into their geometric abstractions.

It would be a mistake to speculate that these artists attended seances or occult meetings in any great seriousness, but these preoccupations were certainly in vogue in Russia at the time, and there are many parallels between the ideas of numerous mystical groups and concerns of modernist artists at the beginning of the 20th century.

For artists like Kandinsky, Malevich and Rodchenko there was a whole new world of esoteric religious iconography coming largely from theosophy and intermingled with landscape imagery. It provided the ingredients for a totally abstract pictorial language.

The theosophists relied substantially on the oriental tradition of Indian esoteric philosophers. Blavatsky's reduction of basic truths and all world religions and philosophies to the Hindu 'cosmic egg' is reflected in total abstraction, and the concept of nirvana from Buddhist philosophy could be adequately illustrated by some of Malevich's minimalist reductions - in a sense nothing had given him everything. There was also theosophical literature available, on how to visualise the invisible world of astral bodies, thought-forms and energies, and the 'zero of forms' can be said to represent energy in its physical or mystical terms. This energy latent in all matter was the discovery of 'cosmic energy', and was the central theme in the writings of the philosopher, P.D. Ouspensky. He also owed much to German romanticism, particularly in his 'Tertium Organum', published in 1911. Schelling had insisted that every art must always return to the world's 'primordial energy', and for Ouspensky "art (including poetry and music) is a path to cosmic consciousness" and "a sensation of infinity". (2) Ouspensky was personally acquainted with a number of artists of the avant-garde, with whom he shared a strong interest in the oriental practices of yoga, fasting, gymnastics and psychological preparation for the day's work. This was later taken up in the 'masdarnam' of the Bauhaus, and also by Beuys in preparation for some of his performances. Ouspensky and other bohemians had a curious tendency toward nomadic bouts of physical as

well as artistic searching. Like Beuys' mystic hare, they covered large distances. Gurdjieff, Ouspensky's fellow philosopher, went on marathon marches across the Caucasus. The artist Filonov went on trips to the Holy Land. Pelhov-Vodkin set out to visit western museums on a bicycle, and Kandinsky, setting the example for Beuys' mystic hare, to and fro between Russia and Germany where he was to become one of the expressionists greatest spiritual exponents.

The artistic style moved from symbolism into suprematism, futurism and constructivism. Its self awareness and its relationship to bourgeois society grew more intense. Artists looked upon their work as instruments for transforming society. In Germany after the war this trend was headed by expressionism, which became viewed as the visual symbol of utopian socialism.

In Russia, 'proletkult' was an organisation set up to present artistic production as something to co-exist somehow with the everyday labour of the proletariat. In terms of art theory, it represented a re-engagement with the theme of utopian thought of the 19th century - art as an instrument of social organisation.

There was much debate about how to present art as a spiritualised activity without succumbing to bourgeois values, while at the same time retaining the idea of art as a formation of extreme social function and organisational value (an idea also inherited from the German romantic idealists, particularly Schiller, and one that is also particularly relevant to Beuys' later work).

"The constructivists are putting into practice this rationalisation of artistic labour by means of material labour, that labour in which the workers themselves are directly involved."

"The constructivists are convinced that with the growing influence of the materialist world view, the so-called 'spiritual' life of society, the emotional qualities of people can no longer be cemented by abstract categories of metaphysical beauty and by mystical intrigues of a spirit soaring above society".(3)

The belief in art as social transformer, in the spiritual as well as political sense, forges a strong link between romanticism, the Russian avant-garde, expressionism, and Joseph Beuys. As with the romantics the expressionists rose out of an oppressive cultural atmosphere. The rapid industrialisation of Germany around the turn of the century had profound implications for the Wilhelmine empire. Reactions against industrialism and materialism dominated intellectual thought. Artists, writers, philosophers and political thinkers sought to find alternative directions. Some looked toward socialism and anarchism, others studied German mystics like Meister Eckhart and Jakob Bohme, or theosophists such as Blavatsky and Steiner. Others turned to study Buddhism and Hinduism or such esoteric religions as Rosicrucianism.

"Our epoch is a time of tragic collision between matter and spirit, and of the downfall of the purely material worldview".(4) Kandinsky.

Expressionism was associated with a new religion of mysticism, with the cosmic and universalism. The "Brucke" and "Blau Reiter" were

considered expressionistic and curiously the 'Blau Reiter' had a number of Russians as well as Germans as its early leaders.

With the publication of Kandinsky's 'On the spiritual in art' in 1912 the equation of abstraction, expressionism and mysticism came to the surface and was noted by critics and the public.

While Kandinsky claimed expressionism to be representative of a new idealism, other artists, like Marc, Macke, Nolde and Kirchner preferred to communicate with nature primarily through feelings and intuition. Klee and Kandinsky at the same time studied nature with a cool, scientific interest, taking the cue once again from Steiner. Kandinsky maintained that any investigation into creative process must be undertaken with the help of both scientists and occultists. He expressed the objective of this scientific method to be an ability to feel and understand the apparently fragmented appearances in their organic interconnectedness. He placed an emphasis on feeling as well as on understanding nature as an organic manifestation.

Both Klee and Kandinsky were close to Goethe, and particularly Novalis, in this unusual and romantic combination of the impassioned yet the detached dedicated naturalist.

In the works of Klee (fig. 13) the recurrent images are nearly always related to growth and transformation, growth thought of as a spread of energies on all sides. His aim on canvas was always to transform substances into processes.

This theme of transformation, of movement from one state to another, is also central to Beuys' expanded concept of sculpture. I feel that both Beuys and Klee subscribe to Goethe's morphological approach to nature and existence, also to his refusal to treat the laws active in both in isolation from each other.

Another key attitude Beuys shares with many expressionists is his conscious disregard for bourgeois value. Through the crudity and primitiveness of his expression, artists like Kirchner or Nolde have used an apparently primitive but actually highly refined style.

The expressionists shared with the romantics the longing for union with the spirit world and the ready acceptance of occult notions of infinity and transcendence.

Schlegel had spoken of art as "the secret attraction to a chaos which lies concealed in every blossom of the universe", a chaos "perpetually striving after new and marvellous births".(5) In the case of Nolde, Marc, Klee and Kandinsky this attraction was essentially a progression from representation to non-representation, from the object to the non-objective. (fig. 14). In so doing, the romantic obsession with cosmological images of death and resurrection or higher rebirth are perpetuated.

"We must accept the chaos that is to come, we must return to the realms of disorder, of the unconscious, of formless experience, of brute life and far beyond brute life to the beginning of all things ... in order to be able to bring about a new creation, valuation and distribution of life". (6)

This reaction - to seek out the primeval in the face of cultural complexity - is of course a recurrent theme in mankind's history, but it is of particular intense profundity for the romantic.

The expressionists as well as the romantics were driven by the conviction that artistic survival was at stake, they largely rejected the scientific and materialist outlook of the day. But for Steiner and others, some developments in 19th century physics - particularly atomic theory, supported the 'dematerialisation of matter'. It aided him in his quasi-scientific speculations about spirit as finer matter and matter as condensed spirit. There were connections with Steiner's claims that he had travelled through time and observed the course of the world through many ages, and Einstein's general theory of relativity, which replaced the occult concept of a fourth dimension or 'spiritual realm' with time. Steiner, like Kandinsky, was of the opinion that esoteric sciences and esoteric mysticism should be drawn closer together rather than separated even further. This had been a growing tendency and was one of the major reasons why Steiner in fact left the theosophists to set up the Anthroposophical Society, so as to try and aid mankind in an understanding of himself as a spiritual being, and to try to create a closer brotherhood of man, nature and spirit.

Expressionism as well as constructivism had anticipated Beuys' social sculpture. Expressionism became recognised as a visual symbol of utopian socialism.

The theosophical writings of Blavatsky at this time still influenced Kandinsky and many of his contemporaries. "Man is a little world...

a microcosm inside the great universe. Like a foetus, he is suspended by all his three spirits in the matrix of the macrocosmos; and while his terrestrial body is in constant sympathy with his parent earth, his astral soul lives in unison with the sidereal anima mundi. He is in it as it is in him, for the world-pervading element fills all space and is space itself, only shapeless and infinite". (7) Blavatsky.

Blavatsky establishes connections between the western romantic tradition of infinity and the ancient wisdom of India, and to modern science she described the 'anima mundi' (astral soul) as the "chaos of the ancients", the "soul of the world" of Plato and the pythagoreans, "the deity in the shape of ether pervading all things" of the Hindus. The modern ether in which scientists before Einstein believed, and referred to even by Newton as 'divine sensorium', the nirvana of Buddhism, were all speculated as being part of the same thing.

The pantheistic and sometimes monist writings of Steiner, Blavatsky, Ouspensky, and Carpentier and Emerson in England, helped to clarify and broaden the romantic Germanic's passionate need for metaphysics. Ouspensky even went so far as to speculate that "nobody ever saw matter nor will he ever - it is possible only to think matter". (8) As a manifestation of their esoteric concerns, the expressionists, especially Kandinsky, attempted to express ideas of spiritual possibilities through images of brilliantly chaotic colours, but with a built in resolution. (fig. 15) (Steiner had described the hidden worlds as full of amorphous floating colours). Some of these

paintings contain motifs of destruction and redemption, a romantic theme later capitalised on by Beuys, but it served as a paradox. As expressionism became increasingly criticised as not being able to reach people, abstraction came under attack as being decorative and without meaning. The dadaists were particularly critical and dismissed it as "pathetic gestures which presuppose a comfortable life free from conflict and strife".(9) Critics and leftist groups proclaimed it was time to abandon 'cosmic swirls' and called for a return to the object, but the universalist and mystical orientation of expressionism continued in the Bauhaus, where Kandinsky would later teach.

The writings of Steiner remained of particular importance to Kandinsky. His presence in Munich and his belief that artistic experiences strongly stimulate the development of spiritual understanding, contributed to Kandinsky's interest while writing 'On the spiritual in art'.

Steiner advised such practices of meditation as contemplating a natural object, crystal or plant, to awaken higher perceptions, and it is tempting to speculate that this may have been a motivating factor in Beuys' early studies in the natural sciences.

Expressionism was compared with Steiner's thinking by Gustav Hartlaub, the assistant director to the Kunsthall in Mannheim. He also pointed out parallels between Franz Marc's animal paintings and Steiner's experiences in the ethereal and astral planes, a concept

used by Beuys in silent action 'Steeltable/handaction (corneraction)' 1969, where sculpting of space through gestures implied the extension of the body into these levels.

It is clear that romanticism, oriental mysticism and Steiner's teaching have much in common and have, to an extent, even influenced each other. Beuys is an artist where categorisation becomes very difficult. His range of means of expression, his preoccupation with invisible entities, and his 'cult of personality' have made this virtually impossible. But he does share with other artists, particularly the expressionists and symbolists, a strong need for a belief in depth of existence, in metaphysical worlds hidden from ordinary sense perception, and this perhaps the strongest thread that can be picked out from the warp and weft of the intellectual, mystic, artistic and philosophical concerns of the Germanic people as a whole during the last couple of centuries.

CHAPTER IV - FOOTNOTES

1. Tuchman, Maurice; Freeman, Judi, "The Spiritual in Art Abstract Painting 1890 1985" L.A. County Museum of Art, Abbeville Press, New York 1986, p. 169.
2. IBID, p. 220.
3. Bowlit, John E. "Russian Art of the Avant Garde" Thames and Hudson 1988, p. 241.
4. Tuchman, Maurice; Freeman, Judi, "The Spiritual in Art Abstract Painting 1890 1985" L.A. County Museum of Art, Abbeville Press, New York 1986, p. 202.
5. Rosenblum, Robert "Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition" Thames and Hudson, London 1975, p. 193.
6. IBID, p. 216.
7. Tuchman, Maurice; Freeman, Judi "The Spiritual in Art Abstract Painting 1890 1985" L.A. County Museum of Art, Abbeville Press, New York 1986, p. 230.
8. IBID, p. 222.
9. IBID, p. 208.

CHAPTER V

BEUYS' EXPANDED CONCEPT AND ITS HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

From an examination of the social context and symbolism used by the romantics and expressionists it becomes apparent that Beuys, within his own context in contemporary German society, restores the connection with the romantic spirit and with an empathy towards nature.

He revives the anti-materialistic visionary core of avant-garde art and its belief that art is a spiritual transformation of life, and by so doing continues the idealistic tradition of such 'germanic' artists as Kandinsky and Mondrian, and even Friedrich Runge and Blake to some extent. But like the expressionists, Beuys' work is not easily understood unless one becomes involved in his own system of thought. It also defies explanation in conventional aesthetic or art historical terms. His performances can often lead to a view of him as being gratuitously pretentious from an aesthetically informed perspective. Together with the 'Brucke' and 'Blau Reiter', Beuys made a stand against bourgeois materialist attitudes. With his use of valueless material such as fat and felt his conception of alchemical processes as art it continues with the expressionists conceptions of art, both make the assumption of art's spiritual profundity.

The expressionists ambition was to create a style that would be conducive to the creation of a new consciousness. Beuys' use of fat as a metaphor for the alchemical transformation of 'prima materia' to

the 'ultima materia' of human consciousness subscribes to this same philosophy.

Beuys' works gradually became more a vehicle for his social and political ideas rather than ends in themselves. He developed his expanded concept of art as social sculpture and declared everyone to be an artist. He emerged as a major cult figure during the student demonstrations of the late 60s, and declared the student meta-party to be his greatest work of art. His lecture activities intensified and took him to several European countries. The aim was to extend the notion of sculpture to that of social sculpture, the three major principles of his theory of sculpture, thinking, feeling and willing, derived from Steiner, were carried on into questions of freedom, democracy and socialism.

The term 'everyone is an artist' implies an intensified feeling for life, for the processes of living and for the structures of society. I would suggest that for Beuys this process of personally understanding and discovering the world firstly began with a familiarity with the work of Steiner and subsequently with sculpture, or more precisely with material as carrier and conveyor of meaning. His 'expanded concept of art' is the affirmation of man's productive and transformative energy as his highest essence and is a concept with a deep historical past. Steiner's concepts of thinking, feeling and willing directly influenced Beuys' theory of sculpture and were carried on into political concerns which gave rise to the 'energy plan for western man'. This was a call for the regeneration of

thinking which could lead to an alternative to private (western) and state (eastern) capitalism. It also demonstrated the principles of the free international university.

"The energy plan for western man is an evolutionary diagram, a statement of faith in humankind's ability to emerge from the current crisis brought about as a result of positivist, materialist and mechanistic thinking in the west, and to evolve a stage further." (1)

The concept of the energy plan is based on Beuys' belief that the human being is fundamentally a spiritual being and that our vision of the world must be extended to encompass all the invisible energies with which we have lost contact, or from which we have become alienated, so that new energies can be created, and for Beuys these are the real and living substances, the democratic forces of love, warmth and freedom.

Beuys' aspirations towards creating a new and more spiritualised utopian society through creativity has much in common with the expressionists romantic, rather idealistic search for salvation through metaphysical concerns and the Russian avant-gardes idea of art as a formation of extreme social function, which in turn seems to be inherited from the German romantic idealists, particularly Schiller. Beuys associated his artistic labour with human labour in general, as did the constructionists. In fact, what Beuys considers as creativity is equatable with the concept of 'labour power' in marxist philosophy.

The expansion of terms and definitions beyond their conventional restricted applications is the key to Beuys' energy plan, as well as his work in general.

The creation of new energies, the democratic forces of love, warmth and freedom and how they interact with thinking, feeling and willing may be applied to the social context and is dealt with in great detail in Rudolph Steiner's book 'The Philosophy of Freedom'. "As we put more emphasis on trying to project will into our thinking, our behaviour becomes more refined until we can embody thoughts in our will before it is projected into thinking, thoughts can become actions by coming through our will, so our will, which is influenced from the outside (karma) can cleanse our thoughts and so enable us to obtain a higher degree of freedom over our intellect. The element that drives us up towards increasingly perfect levels of behaviour is warmth or love, it motivates us to permit our actions with thought through devotion to the outside world".(2)

Beuys' commitment to socialism as a basis for spontaneous spiritual individuality relates to Steiner's lectures in 1923 at the Goetheanum entitled 'About Bees', in which he talks about the mysteries of pollen gathering, the absorption of honey by other bodies, the chaotic flowing consistency of bees wax and honey, and that these remain great reservoirs of energy and spiritual warmth. Bees had been a feature in Beuys' work since 1947 when he modelled queen bees from beeswax on wood. (fig. 16) They are also the subject of drawings in the 50s and later wax and honey become sculptural material. This was brought to a conclusion of sorts in 'honey pump' at the 1977 Documenta 6 exhibition (fig. 17).

"With 'honey pump' I am expressing the principles of the free international university working in the bloodstream of society, flowing in and out of the heart organ - the steel honey container - are the main arteries through which the honey is pumped out of the engine room with a pulsing sound, circulates round the free university area, and returns to the heart. The whole thing is only complete with people in the space around which the honey artery flows and where the bee's head is to be found in the coiled loops of tubing with its two iron feelers".

He goes on to state: "Will power in the chaotic energy of the double engine churning the heap of fat, feeling in the heart and bloodstream of honey flowing throughout the whole, thinking powers in the Eurasian staff, the head of which rises from the engine right up to the skylight of the museum and then points down again". (3)

The belief that spiritual communicativeness or expressivity is an organic characteristic of nature and its processes would seem to be a basic requirement for the romantic. It has been of profound importance to such artists as Goethe, Novalis, Runge, Kandinsky, Klee and Mondrian, as well as Beuys and Steiner although these two have a particularly close relationship to each other.

This is again evident if we consider Beuys' interest in homeopathy and agriculture, as a direct result of his concept for 'The Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Studies'.

He founded the 'Institute for the Rebirth of Agriculture' based on lectures in Italy in which he explained how agriculture has been considered exclusively from the materialistic and scientific viewpoint that alternative technologies and procedures towards the ecological environment in general must be devised, a system which would take into consideration the 'astral' factors which influence plants. Referring back to Goethe he insisted on the need to make use of methods that allow one to descend to the bases of phenomena according to the particular need of the moment. Here Beuys is in fact acting as a spokesman for Steiner's neo-romantic concept of the salvation of the natural and agricultural environment through bio-dynamics - a type of astrological farming derived from occult knowledge which has been put to use in many countries today.

The fact that Beuys has borrowed so heavily from the concepts of Steiner, one could say modelled his life upon him, to a large extent without due acknowledgement (i.e. the Goetheanum and the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research) only helps to fuel the critical speculation about the myth of his origin and personal motivating factors. These must now be given closer scrutiny.

CHAPTER V - FOOTNOTES

1. Tisdall, Caroline. "Joseph Beuys" Thames and Hudson, London 1979, p. 207.
2. de Fouw, Remco. "The Spiritual Science of Rudolph Steiner" Thesis, May 1990, p. 22.
3. Tisdall, Caroline. "Joseph Beuys" Thames and Hudson, London 1979, p. 254.

CONCLUSION

The real events in Beuys' background remain questionable. In the information available about him there have been many inconsistencies between his life and work. He contradicts himself in many ways, in fact one critic has even described him as a 'Teutonic bogeyman full of simple minded utopian drivel', but he has also been celebrated as the most important artist to emerge from postwar Germany!

There are many conflicting opinions. Although one thing he has been consistent in is his adherence to aspects of German culture, it has already been demonstrated how he has perpetuated the ideological concerns of the romantic and expressionistic spirit. His life and his art were separable, indeed his art stretches the accepted definition of art to the point where 'art' can seem trivial in comparison. The lack of a convenient language to adequately deal with his work has served to reinforce various versions or myths, it is this difficulty which has contributed to the Beuys cult, also his acute understanding of how myths are made. His ability to frame himself has often been said to be his greatest art work; the shaman phoenix that rose from the debris of a broken Stuka, cleansed from the sins of war (death is a transition from one state to another; in shamanism this has been seen as a positive factor, initiation comes through the simulation of death) which had been instigated by German fascism and resulted in the annihilation of millions of people leaving mental blocks and severe psychic scars on everybody living in this period.

Beuys' metaphorical death and rebirth may indeed have been an attempt to prematurely try and come to terms with his nation's guilt.

There have been many harsh criticisms from people who believe that germanic romanticism was the major source for nazi ideology.

"In the work and public much of Joseph Beuys the German spirit of the postwar period finds its new identity by pardoning and reconciling itself prematurely with its own reminiscences of a responsibility for one of the most cruel and devastating forms of collective political madness that history has ever known."

"As much as Richard Wagner's work anticipated and celebrated these collective regressions into germanic mythology and teutonic stupor in the realm of music, before they became the actual reality and the nightmare that set out to destroy Europe it would be possible to see in Beuys' work the absurd aftermath of nightmare, a grotesque coda acted out by a perfidious trickster. Speculators in Beuys' work did well. He was bound to become a national hero of the first order, having reinstalled and restored the sense of a - however deranged - national self and historic identity."(1)

Viewed in this light, it is also possible to imagine Beuys as having aspirations, not only of developing himself spiritually, but also as developing himself into a kind of maximum leader or mock Führer, being more interested in the maintenance of his own cult of personality than in the making of 'good art'.

If this were to be the case, Rudolph Steiner may even have anticipated him when he wrote "It is not surprising to meet peculiar dreamers. They are sufficiently disrupted to be open to unconditioned experiences. (The dreamer) tends to remove frontiers of everyday life so that it can cover the unusual with the ordinary and vice versa. The divided self accumulates a feeling of sin whose power seems almost forgotten and unfathomable. The internalised super-ego, the pride and certainty of a mimic messiah that those characters develop, would never be attained by any normal being, even in states of highest mental exaltation. No false Demetrius would maintain himself for long, but a false Jesus among madmen will do well." (2)

Beuys tried to clarify to the German people that there was a task to accomplish in the world, that this task was now to deploy a resurrective force. One critic stated that he tried to do this by "taking old, all-too familiar half dead spiritual ideas and reviving them in the way a taxidermist would." (3) This amusing analogy although clever I feel is little more than just that.

What in fact Beuys was trying to do is a difficult, if not impossible, thing. He tried to address an audience art as such has rarely tried to address, "the great indeterminate mass audience that Plato sarcastically called the beast that swallows everything." (4) I believe his intentions, although possibly naive and at times subject to egocentricity, were basically wholeheartedly positive.

"The only way is the non violent transformation, non violent, but not indeed because violence does not appear promising at a given time or for particular reasons. No non violence on principle, on human, intellectual moral and socio-political grounds." (5)

Beuys was criticised as a media opportunist and it has been said that genuinely politically motivated people did not take him seriously, that his intellectual position could only be understood in terms of aesthetic ideology, that he represented a utopian position.

Even from an art historical perspective it remains notoriously problematic to classify his art and performances without establishing immediate limitation. His work says something about what art can be and perhaps what it was when it was more integral to society. His works hark back to a time when 'art objects' were fetishes that functioned in a more communal, magical, even therapeutic way. Considered in this sense, it would make the aesthetically self-conscious art objects of today seem quite limited.

As a social sculptor he chose human consciousness to be his medium. The statement 'everyone is an artist' is the clearest formulation of his intention, it means a widened concept of art in which the whole process of living itself is the creative act. On one level it is a rejection of narrow definitions and of the restriction of art to the products of a specialised group of professionals. But, more importantly, it implies an intensified feeling for life, for the processes of living and for the structures of society.

Beuys is a rare crossbreed of the mystical, political radical, and by being described amongst other things as wise fool, universal genius, anti-artist, mystic, shaman and Goth, the myth woven around him has become too dense to warrant a decisive and wholly conclusive stance in the summing up of this dissertation. But I believe I have gone

some of the way toward achieving my objective, which was to penetrate beyond much of the mainstream art historical and art critical information on the subject of Beuys, which after a certain amount of investigation, I found, began to repeat itself unnecessarily as if the individual authors were perhaps too cautious about making many fresh or speculative claims in regards to the possible depth of his work and life.

By investigating the parallels drawn between Beuys, the expressionists and romantics, I have come to a better understanding of how in art history the metaphors may change but that certain underlying psychological principals deeply rooted in Teutonic mysticism have remained steadfast, and to a degree intensified in the onslaught of the materialist world view and super bourgeois culture. To come to a deeper understanding of Beuys, it is necessary to try and understand what it is to be a "romantic", that the retreat from reason, the profound significance of nature and the belief that an alternative or more spiritualised attitude toward life is necessary if man is to even consider, yet alone attempt, a positive but not necessarily regressive return to a deeper communion with his internal world as well as that which surrounds him. For Beuys this process of individuation, of personally understanding and discovering the world,

began with material as both carrier and conveyor of meaning and with an understanding of the anthroposophical concepts of Rudolph Steiner. This, along with theosophy, has strongly influenced much of what is significant in the artistic sphere of the last century and beyond.

In answer to Beuys' critics, who would associate him with certain nationalistic tendencies, I would like to point out that anthroposophy and Waldorf education were banned by the nazis during the war. By demonstrating how each of Beuys' major works is in fact a synthesis of Steiner's entire philosophy, I have at time been critical of how Beuys, as well as much of the writings about him, have given little credit to this background. At the same time, and to the contrary, I would like to give credit to him for taking it upon himself to reawaken in humanity an awareness of a possibly deeper and more all-encompassing structure than that which is promoted by the present money, power and consumerist orientated society of today.

A figure such as Beuys could only have arisen from post war germany. His frantic preaching for a spiritual rebirth sought to exorcise the demons of the past and to indicate to the German people particularly, a new way forward and a new understanding of the term 'artist' and of creativity as being applicable to all of society, rather than the specialised 'few'. He shares this ideology with the Russian avant-garde as well as the expressionists to some degree.

Beuys' quest for extreme individuality, at the expense of an acknowledged linkage with a deep cultural past, particularly the influence of Steiner: his pantheistic world view and idealistic concepts place him squarely as a great romantic. In fact, in art historical terms he could possibly be seen as one of the greatest contemporary romantics. As a leading exponent of German mystical thought Beuys may now appear to be somewhat less original than so much of the readily available material on him would lead us to believe, but his idealism, determination and artistic prowess have made a great contribution to the world, which without him, I believe, would be a far more desolate place.

CONCLUSION - FOOTNOTES

1. Buchloh, Benjamin, H.D. "The Twilight of the Idol" Artforum, Jan 1980, pp 38-39.
2. IBID, p. 37.
3. Kuspit, Donald B. "Beuys fat felt and alchemy", Art in America May 1980, p. 88.
4. IBID p. 91.
5. Tisdall, Caroline. "Joseph Beuys" Thames and Hudson, London 1979, p. 272.

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