

The Idea of “Gesamtkunstwerk” and its Reception in German Performance-Art after 1945

ALEXANDRA VINZENZ

(University of Mainz)

My paper will discuss Wagnerian influences on Joseph Beuys, my goal being to work towards a clearer definition of “Gesamtkunstwerk.” I want to suggest that Wagner’s concept was adapted and thus had consequences even 100 years later in post-War Germany.¹ For this, I will discuss one of Beuys’s “Aktionen,” and I’ve chosen his earliest one where he acted solo after his time working with FLUXUS.² This action shows his first steps towards a “plastische Theorie,” a flexible or plastic theory of art, in other words. I will concentrate on the second version of *DER CHEF THE CHIEF* from December 1st, 1964, as was presented in the gallery René Block in Berlin.³ It lasted for some eight hours. Beuys specially prepared the main room of the gallery:⁴ On the left wall, he had placed finger nails and a tuft of hair at eye-level, underneath them a strip of fat, on the far left a block of fat and on the far right another block of fat.⁵ The door between the anteroom and the action-room was barred with wooden slats, but still allowed access to the action-room. Most of the visitors however watched the event from the anteroom. When the happening began at 4 p.m., the room was brightly illuminated.

Beuys began by wrapping himself up in felt and layng down diagonally in the center of room. Along his axis he placed two rabbits and beneath his head a copper bar wrapped in felt. Another copper bar leaned against the wall. In his tunnel, Beuys had a microphone connected to a loudspeaker system. The action was completely static; neither the material was moved, nor did Beuys move in his felt. From time to time, however, he broadcasted breathing, rattling, coughing, sighing, fizzeling, or [whistling noises](#), though most often a hoarse phoneme that was described as resembling the cry of a deer.⁶ The visitors’ reactions were manifold; the mystification of the hidden actor produced confusion.⁷ The spectators nevertheless remained silent and concentrated.

What were Beuys’s aims in setting up such a remarkable configuration? To answer this, let’s first turn towards his selected material and explore its symbolic value

and significance. We soon find ourselves within a flow of ideas, all connected by metaphors of change, evolution and transformation—but nested in a veritable jungle of symbolic meaning.

The actor's posture stretched out on the floor in a tunnel of felt was meant to be a first sign. Beuys was wrapped up in utter darkness for a total time of no less than eight hours. Blackness, darkness, tunnel: For Beuys, those were metaphors of the butterfly which grew up as a caterpillar, then transformed and evolved. Darkness, however, was not something passive: It had an active component as well, triggering the process leading to what Beuys called the "imago."⁸ The layers of felt covering Beuys signified some sort of final situation. Taken together, the tunnel of felt combined two different meanings: the possibility of development as well as a state of finality.

The felt-wrapped copper bars signified an energy-laden, transmitting element. So as a metaphor that was half-semiotic, half-electroacoustic, Beuys performatively became the sender, the copper bars depicted transmitters, and the visitors were forced in the role of receivers. The rabbits placed beneath Beuys played a further part in this framework of encoded meaning. They signified, as Beuys explained two decades later, the "external organs of man."⁹ So—to quote Beuys—"the animal belongs to man. It is the precondition of man and his development. The animal has sacrificed itself to enable man."¹⁰ Therefore the rabbits represented a future life. Evidently, this is a re-wording of ideas that Rudolf Steiner had formulated at the beginning of the 20th century.¹¹

Going deeper in the material, concerning copper and felt as metaphors. Furthermore, there is the cold fat around the entrance. External heating was used to liquefy the solid fat. Here again, Beuys shows a form of transformation, this time, however, in a more passive way—heated by an external source—than in the felt-and-butterfly metaphoric structure.

Let me summarize these findings about Beuys's material: Central to the action was obviously the idea of evolution which Beuys depicted rather as a transformation. This idea was 'spelled out' in ways differing in their artistic means as well as in their meaningful ends.

The only truly active element were the sounds uttered by Beuys—mainly the "Ö" sounds. "This," he explained, "is a primary sound, reaching far back, [...] Acoustically it's like using just the carries wave as a conveyor of energy without loading it with semantic information. The wave carries the kind of sound usually found in the animal

kingdom. The wave is unformed; semantics would give it form (Theory of Sculpture). The sounds I make are taken consciously from animals. I see it as a way of coming into contact with other forms of existence, beyond the human one. [...] This means that my presence there in the felt was like that of a carrier wave, attempting to switch off my own species' range of semantics."¹² When he spoke of primary sound, Beuys did not mean something historically old, rather an archetype. Again, the idea of evolution appears. What Beuys wanted to achieve was communication between himself—as an earthly man—and something higher.

As we have seen, Beuys's selection and usage of material expressed ideas of transformation and communication. Their combination appealed to the spirit as well the instincts: "Art,"—again, this is Beuys speaking—"is here to educate the senses, for growing new organs that we may not yet have."¹³ Thus, a fundamental aspect of Beuys's art becomes apparent: It's not only aesthetic, but made to *appeal to* and *alter* the recipients. Specifically, we detect here communication with an "higher realm" and the idea of evolution by transformation. But why did Beuys intend to effect such a transformation by/through art instead of writing a theoretical treatise?

Initially, we have to recognize that Beuys didn't believe in a common experience but in an individual path—a process of self-transformation that followed from his axiom "every person is an artist." This in turn is the central idea of Beuys's concept of the so-called "soziale Plastik" or "social sculpture." When he postulated that "every person is an artist,"¹⁴ he was thinking of an art of society. He did *not* say that every person is a painter, an architect, or a dancer—but "an artist," a social artist. Self-transformation, accordingly, had the potential of social reform. This idea was performatively realized in the 1964 action. The action is important as one of the first steps towards the larger concept of social sculpture that Beuys later developed more completely.

Beuys's ideas are based on a critique of the traditional understanding of art which, in his reading, reflected modern science and its materialism. Within art, sculpture was of special importance. Beuys distinguished two fundamental principles of sculpture: heat and coldness. These opposites were materialized on the one hand in organic and on the other hand in [crystalline](#) fashion, forming an interplay of nature and spirit. We can see here how Steiner's 'footprint' now becomes more defined and how Beuys's work gets a more decisively anthropological outline:¹⁵ "Sculpture is a synonym for the human condition," Beuys said, "a term for man himself, with an objective character."¹⁶ Beuys

went one crucial step further, however, seeing *everybody* as a sculptor of the grand social organism. And again, the core part of this “theory of plastic” was embodied in the arrangement of material and its physical condition—for instance, fat changing its physical state and thus visualizing the two poles.

So when he declared that “every person is an artist,” Beuys did not mean, to point out this important difference once more, that every person would be a great painter or a gifted sculptor. Rather, creativity would no longer be limited to traditional art forms but take over all facets of life. Creativity was a *principle* of life, and the freely creating human being the founder of a new social order. Turning from the singular ‘ich’ to the plural ‘wir’ therefore describes a collective process of evolution that would lead to what Beuys called “Gesamtkunstwerk zukünftiger Gesellschaftsordnung.”¹⁷

As we have seen, “social sculpture” describes Beuys’s understanding of art. When he wanted to transform society through art, he referred to the heavily history- and ideology-laden word “Gesamtkunstwerk.” So, there is the question why he did it and what he meant by it. For an answer, let’s delve into history.

* * *

The term “Gesamtkunstwerk” was first used by Karl Friedrich Eusebius Trahndorff in 1827.¹⁸ Trahndorff’s post-Romantic understanding centers around an abolishment of the hierarchy of artistic disciplines. Such a concept of hierarchical equality of visual arts, music, architecture and performing arts later formed one (but *only* one) part of Wagner’s reworking of “Gesamtkunstwerk.” Its complementary part, however, was political. Wagner presented this bipartite model in his writings from 1849/50.¹⁹

Architecture played a key role within this network of artistic disciplines, providing the spatial room for each. Firstly, Wagner wanted stage and auditorium to be fused together in a manner that would allow for better communication between performer and recipients. Secondly, he dismissed hierarchical signs such as balconies or loges. There was to be no visual differentiation of ranks, resulting in a form of ‘democratized auditorium.’ Thirdly, Wagner wanted to get rid of the traditional proscenium stage; instead, everyone should have a perfect view.²⁰ It’s apparent how in

Wagner's concept art did not exist for itself, but was more a means for expressing historical, political, and social development. Wagner similarly [defined](#) key factors for all the arts.²¹

But before I turn to the politics of Wagner's concept, I want to take a look at the realisation of his æsthetics in Bayreuth. There, Wagner could realize his vision through the building a new theatre. Some of his musings on architecture indeed came true: the auditorium without ranks and loges, the ideal of an uninterrupted view, and so on. For this space, he created his *music dramas*, first of all *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, which premiered in 1876—the fusion of self-planned architecture, self-composed music, and self-written text into a unity of arts, although stage design and choreography didn't take equal part in this fusion.

The æsthetic component of *Gesamtkunstwerk* was complemented by the political. Based on his umbrella concept of a unity of arts, Wagner postulated new powers to transform society. Art and politics were not just parallels, they coalesced. The carrier of the new artwork was the “Volk” as a corporate society. The artists's collective that shared common beliefs was the first embodiment of this new social order. From this microcosm, the inherent social order should eventually emanate to all the German “Volk” that was to take part in this quasi-cultic experience. Art would heal the fragmentation of society.²²

How were such Wagnerian concepts distributed so that they could re-appear within such a tremendously different æsthetic environment as with Beuys? Around 1900, synæsthetical theory notably came under the influence of theosophy, famously in Kandinsky's *Der Gelbe Klang*, Skrjabin's *Prométhée*, or Schönberg's *Die Glückliche Hand*. All these works aimed not only at interlinking the arts, but fusing them. And, there were more ideas with similar intention: to live ‘in a unison’ of body and soul. Take a look, for example, at the [workers' housing estate](#) in Dresden-Hellerau, the *Anthroposophisches Zentrum* in Dornach (where we meet Steiner again), or at the *Bauhaus* in Dessau directed by Walter Gropius: They all focused on life as æsthetics, movement and dance.

We have seen ideas towards the fusion of artistic disciplines that were also aware of its inherent political potential long before Beuys's "social sculpture." All these concepts and their partial realisations are based on a bipartite model (an aesthetic component as well as a political one). Furthermore the stated examples all exhibit a more or less direct reception to the ideas of Wagner. This applies also to Beuys. To the question of whether he is a Wagnerian, Beuys answered: "I'm not! I rarely thought about Wagner, but I value his idea of 'Gesamtkunstwerk', although later on this became too sacralized and mythologized. I also value to Wagner that at beginning he supported politics."²³ As we can see, Beuys knew Wagner's conception very well. So his statement in a 1984 interview with Antje von Graevenitz is not surprising that he has "100 times more to do with Wagner than the literature has accepted until now."²⁴ But of course, Beuys was not the 20th century Wagner. So, where are the differences?

(1) One of Beuys's focal points, at first glance similar to Wagner, was the unity of movement, activity, space, time, sculpture, material, body, language and sound. Such unity, was embodied by the actor, realize to perform in a specially prepared room. The action was not a pre-determined sequence [of motions](#) carried out by the actor, but was rather designed as an artistic stimulation. Although the space still has an important role, it's no longer a theatre. It's a neutral space specifically prepared with specific material that directly applies to the specific context. This differs dramatically from Wagner's idea of the theatre as a place to demonstrate political mentality. For Beuys, no theatrical archetype is necessary for action—the world, life itself, becomes a stage. "Living is art, art is living," Wolf Vostell had declared a short time before.²⁵ So after 1945, the definition of space changed substantially and reflected a more immaterial concept of transformation by art.

(2) Wagner's vision had been based in music. For Beuys, the fusion of arts was already a normality, and music "a part of his 'sculpture', indeed an essential part. He wouldn't make music but that his sculpture be heard."²⁶ As shown in the examination, Beuys's actions include beyond the space and sculptural idea, gestural and the verbal and acoustical components which are all also of special importance. With the fusion of these different parts, he demonstrated an more expanded term of art, in which action for Beuys are "a *Gesamtkunstwerk* under the method of theatre as diagram."²⁷ There was no more isolation of the different artistic disciplines.²⁸ One of the most important

movements in this context was FLUXUS, a loose group of artists that Beuys had even associated with briefly.²⁹ Beuys, however, soon distanced himself from FLUXUS.³⁰ Let me recall some of the reasons:

- Typical FLUXUS actions were short. Beuys enlarged this time span and created a new space-time-relationship.

- Materials in FLUXUS were often used arbitrarily and without symbolic value. Beuys again and again used similar materials in different variations, and connecting them to autobiographical, historical or mystical meanings.

- FLUXUS events focused on a precise turning point, while *THE CHIEF* realized a ruminant process and called for the recipients' enduring compassion.

- For FLUXUS, anonymity was essential—not so for Beuys, who took a substantial part in his actions. Mythologizing himself, Beuys as actor distanced himself from the visitors. In the course of *his* action, *he himself* demonstrated *his* 'plastic theory' and *his* influence on future society. Such personal mystification might evoke Wagnerian attitudes.

Despite such differences, Beuys saw an ongoing influence from FLUXUS. "What remains," he said, "is its provocative declaration, and this is not to be underestimated. It appeals to all possible powers of the viewer to possibly transcend the vexing question of 'What does it mean?', and to reach nowadays repressed centres of emotion, to the soul, or however one wants to describe this subconscious focal point."³¹ "This is a therapeutic process as well. To provoke means to call to the fore. This in itself is a process of resurrection, when something is called forward."³² "The only revolutionary power is the power of human creativity, [...] the only revolutionary power is art."³³

On the one hand this power is necessary for overcoming the traditional idea of art for a more anthropological art. Once again Wagner appears: he widened the terms of music, and in a similar way we can apply this to Beuys's widening of the term of art. This changing is a process of transformation which for Beuys could only be realized in his actions.³⁴ This very lonely self-education is the first step into the higher visionary idea of a new social order. These first steps Beuys expressed already in the title of the action at hand; Beuys said in an interview in 1981: "The chief" is a name of "an exactly experimental disposal," like in a maneuver as you call *Roter Oktober*.³⁵ In terms of content, this means not 'the chief' in the office, but the chief in yourself. "The *chief* there," Beuys said, "is the human head in it. ['In it' means in the word's etymology—that's an untranslatable pun.] The word 'Chef' is derived from 'head,' 'Kopf.'" [Latin

‘caput’ became French “chef” which in turn became a loan word in German and English.] And every human being has one of them [namely, a head]. Every human being has his or her chief. Every human being therefore has the possibility of determinacy. Hence, the notion of self-determination is contained there. That’s what ‘Chef’ means.”³⁶ This idea of self-determination and the emancipation of the human is the central theme of Beuys’s artwork throughout all his work. And as we’ve seen it is also an important component of the “social sculpture.” Because without this self-education there is no possibility of reaching the status of a creative man and as well as a social artist.³⁷

On the other hand such powers would conjure up the ultimate form of society—free, democratic socialism, providing, as Beuys put it, “autonomy and participation in the realm of culture (freedom), in the structure of law (democracy), and in the world of economics (socialism).”³⁸ Insignificant as this tripartite division may seem at first glance, it precisely echoes the trichotomy of the social organism developed by Steiner in 1917.³⁹ Steiner in turn had referred to the motto of the French revolution, “liberté, égalité, fraternité.” Such nested discursive references suggest that Beuys’s ideas became more and more theory-laden, resulting in turn in a re-adjustment of their practical application. After 1973, words on plates of slate started to become more important than the primal materials fat and felt that had characterized his earlier work.⁴⁰

With *THE CHIEF DER CHEF* Beuys presented his first stages of his plastic theory and thereby distanced himself from FLUXUS by creating a new form of action. This becomes clearer through Vostells announcement: “Beuys calls his work the demonstration of a sculptural principle.”⁴¹ Therein we can see that Beuys’s avoidance of Fluxus was also observed by the other faction. The reactions of the public reflect on one hand these differences, but on the other hand reveal a lot of questions: “One heard phrases like: ‘Unfortunately I’m not informed – what does this mean?’ Or: ‘Has Herr Professor Beuys really been rolled up in there for eight hours?’ Or: ‘Isn’t he hungry then?’ Or: ‘Is that Fluxus?’ Or: ‘Is that a Happening?’ [...] For the majority of the public it was an encounter with Beuys and its motives, with his opinions about sculptural form. For the rest it was another reason to meet each other. Social Life? Did Beuys’s tragic *Fluxus chant* really send them puzzling? It seems so for some, then back to lethargy, personal and family talk about day-to-day problems.”⁴²

Without considering this last question further, let me briefly sum up my theses: Beuys consciously refers to the “Gesamtkunstwerk” concept; he even explicitly cites

this term so intimately connected with Wagner. The action I have focused on offers a glimpse into the *development* of this concept as well, starting with a focus on æsthetic unity (and in turn its transformative power), and leading to the gradual strengthening its political component. In their own ways both—Beuys and Wagner—offer a self-contained and logical conception of the world.⁴³ This, I think, is a good example for both the *reception* of ideas and their *adaptation* to a new sociocultural environment: thus, quite literally a “consequence of Wagner.”

Notes

¹ This examination began from an interview with Joseph Beuys by Antje von Graevenitz in which she mentioned the influence of Wagner (Antje von Graevenitz, “Erlösungskunst oder Befreiungspolitik: Wagner und Beuys,” in *Unsere Wagner: Joseph Beuys, Heiner Müller, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg*, ed. Gabriele Förg (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), 11–49.) From there Mario Kramer (*Klang & Skulptur: Der musikalische Aspekt im Werk von Joseph Beuys*, Diss. Uni. Hamburg 1993 (Darmstadt: Häusser, 1995).) and Jürgen Geisenberger (*Joseph Beuys und die Musik* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 1999).) repeated and supplemented the ideas of von Graevenitz in searching for parallels in the work of Wagner and Beuys. However nobody asked what *Gesamtkunstwerk* in Wagners definition really means. Although, Beuys used the term in a very sensible way.

² For Beuys, actions had the greatest potential for fusing all his ideas into a new concept of art. Uwe Schneede (*Joseph Beuys: Die Aktionen* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Gerd Hatje, 1994)) gives a great compilation of Beuys’s actions.

³ The differences to the first version of the action *DER CHEF THE CHIEF* were: Firstly, the location, the first version was in Copenhagen. Secondly, in the second version the visitors could hear the music of the loudspeaker in the anteroom. This music was by Henning Christiansen, but I can’t say anything in particular about this. Christiansen and Beuys cooperated on many more future actions. Thirdly, the second version should have been a simultaneous action with Robert Morris in New York. Instead Morris decided he would duplicate the action in Berlin, but in an later interview he stated that it was impossible to duplicate Beuys, so he duplicated the special sound. As you can see, the second version was a much more complicated network of different ideas, that’s the reason for choosing the second performance. For further information as to the differences see Schneede 1994, 68–75.

⁴ For photographs of the action see Schneede 1994, 76–79.

⁵ A really precise description of the room with all measurements was written down by Wolf Vostell, a Fluxus artist, for a journal (Wolf Vostell, “Ich bin ein Sender, ich strahle aus! Fluxus, Demonstration der Galerie Block,” *Der Tagesspiegel (Berlin)*, December 3, 1964.) and is published in English translation by Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 94.

⁶ “At very long and irregular intervals compositions by Erik Andersen and Henning Christiansen were played on two tape recorders in apparent opposition to Beuys’ acoustics.” (Vostell 1964 ed. Tisdall 1979, 94). But there isn’t anything else known about these compositions.

⁷ Wolf Vostell described the confusion in his article for example with these words: “People come an go. Sometimes it was calm and even devout like a religious mystical act. Ritual? Many waited (for what?), some saw Beuys finally clamber out around midnight.” (Vostell 1964 ed. Tisdall 1979, 94).

⁸ This is the definition by Antje von Graevenitz for the meaning of blackness, darkness, tunnel in the work of Joseph Beuys. She came to this conclusion after an interview with the artist on the occasion of the presentation of “Loch” in the exhibition “Black” in the Düsseldorfer Kunsthalle, 1981. There he said: “I’m saying ‘imago’ because it’s like in the development of a butterfly where firstly a caterpillar is laying in a tunnel. Everything there is dark and closed up, then suddenly there is an ‘imago’ at the end of the

process.” (english translation by AV, original german in: Antje von Graevenitz, “Beuys’Gedankengang zu einem Ofenloch,” in *Schwarz*, Exhibition catalogue Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf 1981, ed. Hannah Weitemeier (Berlin: Fröhlich & Kaufmann, 1981), 135–138.)

⁹ Beuys in: *Gespräche mit Beuys: Wien-Friedrichshof 1983*, ed. Theo Altenberg and Oswald Oberhuber (Wien, 1983 and Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1988), 73f.

¹⁰ English translation by AV, original german in: *Joseph Beuys und Das Kapital: Vier Vorträge*, ed. Christel Raussmüller-Sauer and Hallen für neue Kunst (Schaffhausen: Hallen für neue Kunst, 1988), 138f.

¹¹ Every human being, who climbs up, must bend in humility to the precursors “which made this possible only for him” (english translation by AV, original german in: Rudolf Steiner, *Von Jesus zu Christus: Ein Zyklus von zehn Vorträgen (presented in Karlsruhe, October 4, 1911)* (Dornach: Rudolf-Steiner-Verlag, 1988), 210.

¹² Joseph Beuys in an interview with Caroline Tisdall for her book (Tisdall 1979, 95).

¹³ English translation by AV, original german in: Joseph Beuys and Michael Ende, *Kunst und Politik. Ein Gespräch* (Wangen: FVA, 1989), 90.

¹⁴ For example Beuys said “Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler” in an conversation with Michael Ende (Beuys and Ende 1989, S. 90). That’s only one example where Beuys used this phrase. He repeated it always and everywhere like a formula.

¹⁵ Beuys became aware of Rudolf Steiner in 1941 from his friend Fritz Rothenburg. In the time following he discussed again and again the Steiners ideas. In 1973 Beuys became a member of the “Anthroposophische Gesellschaft” (Tobia Bezzola, “Steiner, Rudolf (1861–1925),” in *Joseph Beuys*, Exhibition catalogue Kunsthau Zürich 1994, ed. Tobia Bezzola and Harald Szeemann (Zürich: Pro Litteris, 1993), 284.). From there we can conclude that Beuys’s theoretical conception is based on Rudolf Steiner. But it isn’t an illustration of the Steiners doctrine; it’s more a modification. An interesting side detail is once again comment the reception of the Wagnerian idea of “Gesamtkunstwerk” through Steiner. Until now there isn’t enough researches about the connection between the “long” 19th century and the 20th century.

¹⁶ English translation by AV, original german in: Heiner Stachelhaus, “Phänomen Beuys,” *Magazin Kunst* 50 (1973): 42.

¹⁷ A hardly translatable term, perhaps a “total artwork of (‘of a’ or ‘of the’—Beuys’ gives no clue about this important detail) future social order.” (Joseph Beuys, *Ich durchsuche Feldcharakter*, ed. in Volker Harlan, Rainer Rappmann and Peter Schata (Achberg: Achberger Verlag, 1976), 121.)

¹⁸ He wrote this in his script *Ästhetik oder Lehre von der Weltanschauung und Kunst* in 1827.

¹⁹ His three big texts, *Die Kunst und die Revolution* (1849), *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849) and *Oper und Drama* (1850), appeared in a time when the industrial revolution was changing the lives of people. Therefore there was a basis for new and free ideas which Wagner presented.

²⁰ This idea of a ‘political architecture’ is based on concepts of Gottfried Semper. I could clear up this reception of Semper’s ideas in my thesis about “The Gesamtkunstwerk for a New Society: On the Symbiosis of Architecture, Music, and Dramatic Arts in the Anthroposophic Society and the *Bauhaus*”, finished in late 2008 at the university of Mainz.

²¹ There can’t be given more information about this point. But first of all think of his new compositional inventions.

²² For a more detailed view mainly to the political component of the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ see: Udo Bernbach, *Der Wahn des Gesamtkunstwerks: Richard Wagners politisch-ästhetische Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994).

²³ English translation by AV. For further information as to parallels and connections in Wagner’s and Beuys’s works, see von Graevenitz 1984, 11–49; once again in *Joseph Beuys*, Exhibition catalogue Kunsthau Zürich 1994, ed. Tobia Bezzola and Harald Szeemann (Zürich: Pro Litteris, 1993); for more detailed in Geisenberger 1999, 49–55.

²⁴ English translation by AV, original german in: Antje von Graevenitz, “Wagner, Richard (1813–1883),” in *Joseph Beuys*, Exhibition catalogue Kunsthau Zürich 1994, ed. Tobia Bezzola and Harald Szeemann (Zürich: Pro Litteris, 1993), 286.

²⁵ This idea of the fusion of life and art can be seen in Beuys’s creating a new curriculum vitae (first version from 1961); for example therein the birth of Beuys became status of an exhibition. Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz and Karin Thomas used this curriculum vitae as the framework of their book of the life and work of Beuys (Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys* (Köln: Dumont, 1994)).

²⁶ English translation by AV, original german in: Reiner Speck, "Beuys und Musik," in *Joseph Beuys. Multiples, Bücher und Kataloge aus der Sammlung Dr. med. Speck*, Exhibition catalogue Kasseler Kunstverein 1975, ed. Dieter Rudolph (Kassel: Kasseler Kunstverein, 1975), unpag.)

²⁷ English translation by AV, original german in: "Das Gespräch. Joseph Beuys," *Logos. Meinungen zum Zeitgeschehen*, No. 6, Dezember, 1982, 4.)

²⁸ Beuys answered the question of which contemporary composer he prefers: "I make music by myself." (english translation by AV, original german in: Beuys in an interview with Willi Bongard, cited by Geisenberger 1990, 29) But he felt a special relationship to John Cage. For a deeper look into their mutual influence see Geisenberger 1999, 30–42.

²⁹ "Fluxus wasn't a stylistically bordered story. Fluxus was as varied as the participants in this movement, it was roughly the most contradictory that you ever can ever imagine. The only similarity among of the actions was simply the tendency to keep things light and fluid." (english translation by AV, original german in: Beuys in a unpublished interview with Rainer Wick in Düsseldorf (21. Mai 1973), ed. in: Schneede 1994, S. 11.)

³⁰ One of the most important points around the separation was the relationship of art and life. Therein Beuys saw for Fluxus an "aesthetic indifference" (Thomas Dreher, "Après John Cage. Zeit in der Kunst der sechziger Jahre – von Fluxus-Events zu interaktiven Multi-Monitor-Installationen," in *Kunst als Grenzbescheidung: John Cage und die Moderne*, Exhibition catalogue Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung 1991, ed. Ulrich Bischoff (Düsseldorf: Winterscheidt, 1991), 65.) which he didn't share.

³¹ English translation by AV, original german in: Stachelhaus 1973, 60.

³² Joseph Beuys in an interview with Rainer Rappmann; english translation by AV, original german in: Rainer Rappmann, "Der Soziale Organismus – ein Kunstwerk," in *Soziale Plastik: Materialien zu Joseph Beuys*, ed. Volker Harlan, Rainer Rappmann and Peter Schata (Achberg: Achberger Verlag, 1976), 56.

³³ Joseph Beuys in an interview with Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz and Karin Thomas for their book; english translation by AV, original german in: Götz Adriani and Winfried Konnertz and Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys* (Köln: Dumont, 1994), 155, quote by Rappmann 1976, 59.)

³⁴ "Such an action, and indeed every action, changes me radically. In a way it's a death, a real action and not an interpretation. Theme: how does one become a revolutionary? That's's the problem." (Tisdall 1979, 95.)

³⁵ Beuys in an interview with Birgit Lahann: "Ich bin ein ganz scharfer Hase," Beuys-Interview of Birgit Lahann, *Stern*, No. 19, April 30, 1981, 250.

³⁶ English translation by AV, original german in: Beuys 1981, 250.

³⁷ The second component of the title "Fluxus Gesang" belongs to his examination of the loose group of artists. Also it's Beuys's homage to Fluxus.

³⁸ English translation by AV, original german in: Beuys 1976, 121. The importance of this vision and therein the reception of Steiners idea is shown in a letter: "Your [Mr. Schradis] words reached me deeply for recalling to me the name of Rudolf Steiner whom I'm always thinking since my childhood. Because as I know there is from him specially an order to me to clear away all the estrangement and mistrust from the transcendentalism of the people. In political thinking, the field I work in daily, we have to realize the *Dreigliederung* as quickly as possible" (english translation by AV, original german in: Joseph Beuys ed. in: Wolfgang Zumdick, *Über das Denken bei Joseph Beuys und Rudolf Steiner*, Diss. RWTH Aachen (Basel: Wiese Verlag, 1995).)

³⁹ Further information on idea of the "Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus" can be found in Beat Christoph Graber, "Dreigliederung des sozialen Organismus," in *Joseph Beuys*, Exhibition catalogue Kunsthaus Zürich 1994, ed. Tobia Bezzola and Harald Szeemann (Zürich: Pro Litteris, 1993), 250f.

⁴⁰ Later on his idea of "social sculpture" became more and more theoretical, as his introduction to the book of Caroline Tisdall in 1979 shows: "My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture, or of art in general. They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture *can* be and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone:

Thinking Forms – how we mould our thoughts or

Spoken Forms – how we shape our thoughts into words or

SOCIAL SCULPTURE – how we mould and shape the world in which we live: *Sculpture as an evolutionary process; everyone an artist.*

That is why the nature of my sculpture is not fixed and finished. Processes continue in most of them: chemical reactions, fermentations, colour changes, decay, drying up. Everything is in a *state of change*." (Tisdall 1979, 7.)

⁴¹ Tisdall 1979, 94.

⁴² Vostell 1964 ed. Tisdall 1979, 94.

⁴³ Beuys is saying of himself: “All of these actions were necessary for widening the old term of art. As wide, as large as possible that he can take hold of every human activity.” (english translation by AV, original german in: Beuys in an interview with Robert Filliou for his book Robert Filliou, *Lehren und Lernen als Aufführungskünste* (Köln – New York: König, 1970), 161.)