

- right while it is currently installed on the left as a starting point and introduction, according to the Latin reading system.
20. TAV 616A, Tape 1; transcript, pp. 1–14. Beuys brought these topics into the discussion from the start.
 21. Franz-Joachim Verspohl, *Zeichnen ist eigentlich ... nichts anderes als eine Planung (to draw is actually nothing else but to plan). Joseph Beuys bei der Tafelarbeit (Joseph Beuys at work with blackboards)* (Mönchengladbach: Galerie Löhrl Mönchengladbach, 1988). This essay includes an example of two blackboards he completed while teaching as a guest professor at the art academy (Hochschule der bildenden Künste) in Hamburg during the winter of 1974–1975). Later, Beuys stopped using colored charcoal.
 22. TAV 616A, Tape 2; Transcript, p. 12. This phase of the discussion begins here.
 23. TAV 616A, Tape 2; Transcript, pp. 23–9. See this exchange and the dialogue when Hamilton also questioned Beuys' artistic theory.
 24. TAV 616A, Tape 2; Transcript, pp. 13–14.
 25. TAV 616A, Tape 2; Transcript, p. 7.
 26. TAV 616A, Tape 2; Transcript, pp. 30–2. In this summary, Beuys again explains in great detail the meaning of each sign on the blackboard.
 27. TAV 616A, Tape 2; Transcript, p. 32. Here the transcript suggests the senseless term 'bauble' or 'bubble'.
 28. TAV 616A, Tape 2; Transcript, p. 32.
 29. LANGE, *Joseph Beuys: Der Mythos vom Künstler*, Part I, Ch. 1 and 2.
 30. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, 'Modernity and Modernism Reconsidered,' in *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the Forties*, Paul Wood (ed.) (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and the Open University, 1993), pp. 170–260. For changes in art production and reception see *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, ed. Lucy Lippard (London and New York: Praeger, 1973).
 31. *Tate Gallery: An Illustrated Companion* (London 1990), 266; also Mel Ramsden and Michael Baldwin, 'Art & Language on Beuys,' *The Independent*, 30 January 1990. After Simon Wilson introduced Joseph Beuys, along with these blackboards, as one of the most charismatic figures of the conceptual art scene, Mel Ramsden and Michael Baldwin articulated their harsh critique of *Four Blackboards*: 'a massive success in self-mythologizing, literal falsehood and gullibility.'

11. EVERY MAN AN ARTIST

Talks at Documenta V

by Joseph Beuys*

CLARA BODENMANN-RITTER

JOSEPH BEUYS' CONTRIBUTION TO the *Documenta 5* exhibition is the *Office for Direct Democracy*. Beuys is present in Kassel for one hundred days. He discusses different subjects with visitors and speaks from morning until evening. Beuys explains, 'Explanation is also an art form.' What does Beuys have in mind with his demand for 'more creativity for every person'?

Many visitors who come once return. They feel that Beuys addresses their natural desire to develop themselves. Some simply feel encouraged, which is the first stimulus towards the development of a free personality. Beuys states, 'One must make it palatable to people that it is interesting to totally abandon oneself with all of the mistakes that one has. I just want to encourage people not to wait for an ideal state of awareness. They must begin with the current means and with their mistakes.' Beuys' encouragement incites action and many are compelled to do something. Working groups are forming in Germany and abroad.

The conversations reproduced here were recorded over the course of one weekend in Beuys' 'Office' by Clara Bodenmann-Ritter. They correspond to the course of these discussions with unchanged dictation; they give a picture of the course of two days in this office. In a few places in the manuscript, Joseph Beuys later completed or clarified certain aspects of these conversations.

[...] B: Yes. Now we are at the starting point again. Now we are at our real issue: that we understand ourselves first as sites

of education, for information for democracy, for a three-part structure, and so on.

That would be a kind of circulation then?

B: We have to ensure that it is structured organically so that it functions like a person functions internally, like the organs function ... First, in the examination of the matter. Secondly, in that one develops a concept of ... a social order that has never existed before. That simply means: to realize freedom, democracy, and socialism – free democratic socialism. And for this one needs the model of the three-part structure, decartelization on a large scale, so that the domain of culture, all that which makes up intellectual life, is administered on its own, that the basic structure of law is chosen by the people in terms of its basic principles and that likewise, economic life becomes autonomous but must hold itself to the people's democratic constitution.

Our plan is to gradually get laws into the constitution accordingly ... in order to be there at the end of the century, we have to work on the issue now ... In the meantime, there are many people who understand this. There are already a large number of people who have insight into this issue and want to handle it accordingly. So one must strengthen these minorities.

But through what type of mechanism?

B: Through bargaining. Through thinking and bargaining. There is no other possibility ... Here [at Documenta] we introduce the model of an information-site. We are interested in developing as many information-sites as possible in the near future as educational sites for democracy, for freedom, democracy and



11.1. Photograph, Beuys in Documenta Office for Direct Democracy, Kassel, 1972; © 2006 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

socialism. That is our task. We can only solve this as well as possible, reveal with it or produce something out of it that can function as a model, that is, something that other people will also do. For example, when we leave Kassel, a working group or maybe two working groups will work on things here in Kassel. We want to cause a snowball effect. We want to build a network throughout Europe that will work on these things, right? I can only say: of course we can only do it as well as possible.

When you try then, inside of this snowball[ing] system, to present alternative models of schools, subculture or whatever you want to call it...

B: No. We don't want subculture. I didn't say that ... this is not to deny the fact that some very good elements are working in subculture. We don't just want subculture, we want real culture.

It is classified as a subculture.

B: Because it is understood as anti-social.

... So the people that work in your sense don't acknowledge the difference between subculture and culture any more?

B: I don't acknowledge it anyway. We only acknowledge it under certain circumstances.

You must realize, however, Mr Beuys, that there is an enormous mechanism behind this. That is when you have your school, someone may enter it but he is still not free of the compulsory education that is forced on him by the state. That means that he is not allowed to go to Beuys, but must attend a state school instead. He cannot get around this.

B: But why...

No, he cannot go to you...

B: Sure.

Are you building an elementary school that...

B: That is exactly my idea. I want to found a free school for creativity and interdisciplinary research in Düsseldorf. I hope that I will succeed. Everyone can come to me. This school has

a legal status. The basic law offers enough possibilities to found free schools and private schools according to a new model, for example.

But for how many?

B: Yes, of course. That can naturally be a starting point again. It can also just set an example that awakens interest so that the people say yes, this works better, so we want it that way.

And the constitution allows for this possibility?

B: Sure.

I would argue against that.

B: ... First a school is there to develop ability, that is, consciousness. And when the school develops consciousness, then the children will recognize what a future social structure should look like; that means, that one can learn a social feeling or a social sense or knowledge in a free school like this.

Only there, of course. But in our regular schools one is not allowed this, that is clear.

B: Wait a minute!

What does it mean, 'one is not allowed'? One can do so much, that is here or there in the context of the diagram that is being presented here without being immediately reprimanded.

B: Yes. Most don't try it, though. Most just talk.

But it is not desired.

B: But you don't have to do that which is desired; instead do that which is the result of your own thinking.

Thinking must first be prompted, though.

B: Thinking must be prompted in everyone.

But it isn't.

B: You say it isn't. But I have been troubling myself with this issue for years.

You want to create a school where that (independent thought) can be done, where the teachers...

B: There are also other schools where it can be done. You have to be careful about these overall judgements. Enough intent exists among people who think in this direction. So one must organize these people. They must, shall we say, operate a network and must increasingly teach the majority the direction in which one must think.

The work of Sisyphus!

B: Not Sisyphus. It is a difficult job but one that pays off. And is interesting precisely because it is difficult.

But first there must be a start to it.

B: One beginning is already available, though.

Naturally this is a beginning. I also find it an important one. I just doubt that the established power...

B: But your doubt is not useful. Let's determine that your doubt is not useful to you. If you recognized something good, that is, when you have an idea of where one must go, doubt is of no use, in that one despairs over the difficulty. One says, the power is so vast, the counter-power is so vast...

We misunderstood each other here. I am missing the way, that is, with me...

B: You are perfectly entitled to that. But you can't do that in your head for all eternity, instead, if possible, attempt to practise as a model. One gains a lot more experience this way than when one just broods over these things.

... And these doubts, understood in terms of what you just said, would then be a constant doubt, while doubt can also be interpreted differently.

B: I don't doubt at all, no.

But this is also a form of resignation.

B: Me? No, excuse me. When I criticize it is something positive. Wait a minute. What criticism?

I criticize this alternative model, the way you are thinking of it...

B: You still know it ... First, you are criticizing something that

you have not yet fully understood. Now first read through this in detail. If you find mistakes, you are invited to tell me about these mistakes. You want to criticize something generally that you have not yet examined sufficiently.

My criticism is clearly without an exact knowledge, but it is a positive criticism, not destructive.

B: Yes, yes.

It is only criticism in that with this snowball effect – now a question that will not be answered by this issue – it is a question that one can possibly solve through consensus – such a snowball effect takes an enormous amount of time and its effectiveness is enormously meagre.

*Yes, when you doubt it from the beginning.
But I am not doubting.*

B: No...

I'm not... I also want to have this alternative model, I also want to carry out a type of sensible socialism somewhere. But I am not of the opinion that one can accomplish this by a snowball-like production.

B: Yes, well then tell me how one could accomplish this.

Well, so easily... would say, to slip into the existing places slowly and then there...

B: Yes, that is what we are doing.

No, I believe that would be the bigger multiplier.

B: What do you mean by that?

The children that would then possibly come to this school are those whose parents can make it possible, or whose parents already have this awareness. Because the typical parent would not send their children to a school like this. You must agree.

B: But why? They are already torn about this. In principle, I am already practising a free school at a state school. That means, I am not concerning myself with the department of culture.

I know that. But is that sensible, is that correct? Let's say the people that come to you are those whose parents could facilitate it...

B: Whatever! But I have a bunch of working-class children who don't have anything. So I will go in with a grant as long as there is nothing better.

But working-class children can also have an awareness, a good awareness.

B: Right.

But it's about awakening this awareness in people that don't have it.

B: Where can one awaken awareness? ... School is universal. That means, on the street – when you talk about these things with people at the grocer's, the school is at the grocer's at that moment. That means that the educational process not only takes place in schools, but begins when people talk to people about these things.

For that reason I am also of the opinion that I would be the bigger multiplier if I were a teacher. I'm not. If it were the case that I was a teacher in middle school or high school or somewhere I would certainly have a bigger percentage of ... students lacking awareness than you have at your school, where there is interest in the same things.

B: What you say is right – when you say you would have to be the multiplier. I can't accomplish this multiplication alone. So you have to act. Everyone must. Everyone!

I just want to encourage everyone to take this into their own hands, the educational process. Everyone that already can or who could at the moment – we don't need a brilliant talent somewhere. Precisely the ability that one has at the moment must be put to work.

I'm just wondering: How efficiently can I even address all of these problems? Not by, like you said, creeping slowly into institutions through which one would then have a greater influence, but instead to begin working on it at that moment, in which one has recognized that something like this is right, regardless if you are standing at the lathe or...

B: What is your profession anyway? This possibility is probably an absolute given in your job.

Editor (laughing); this is great, though: it's also the job for this.

Isn't it clear that it's easier to disassemble an existing process that appears to us to be negative than to establish a counter-power? If I, for example, or people in my profession, wanted to make a 'counter-cultural' newspaper it would be a tremendous expenditure... Wouldn't it be more sensible to enter the Springer publishing concern?

B: That would be an example of a task for you. Go to the Springer firm and try to change the Springer newspaper.

I wouldn't be able to.

B: I go to the typical state school and try to infiltrate it. Yes! But I'm not giving up, I'm also not sacrificing doing something on the outside. One can do something in the institutions in trying to infiltrate them and outside one can do something to set a model in place ... That is my opinion. One must work with diverse methods anyway. One must always carry on with what is possible.

We also have groups in Southern Germany that are working on the same things, but with different methods. I can't really judge from here what is possible in [the state of] Schleswig-Holstein at the moment. They have to determine that through their own initiative because they know the social situation: what problem is the most important, what has priority? Which method is suitable, either to infiltrate, or to set up a model [outside the institution], or, what doesn't work?

Is there, shall we say, an idea that's moving away from the parliamentary system – where to? To the council system?

B: To democracy. Yes we call it a council system or an active-trustee administration.

Okay to a council system.

B: Yes, right. But a true one, without a central government.

Without a central government? And who controls cross-regional necessities?

B: The trustees. The councils – those that develop only according to a construction from the bottom up, not a government from the top down. Strangely, many say the council model is good but they don't quite want to get rid of the government format, for example. But we want to get rid of the from-the-top-down

form of government and only want a government built from the bottom up. Then one can organically reach centralized organizations that don't function centrally.

Decentralization, right?

B: I don't want to say that because we need centralized task functions. Decentralization wouldn't mean any- and everything to me. In this case what does the central self-governing organ look like?

... But government from the top down is still present visually. Even with the council system there is a leader somewhere.

B: A representative. For example, a first chairman. But the government no longer functions from the top down, that is, parties can no longer make laws without majority opinion however they please, without asking the majority, as it is possible now, as it is possible in Soviet Russia. Rather the people must be asked about decisions here that deal with the constitution, for example. And the other legal decisions lie with the self-governing committees, such as business policies, school policies, etc.

Yes, I find that sensible. It is clear; it assumes that everyone is political.

B: Yes. No area of life will be free from this concept in the future. That means that people will recognize the social organism, and they must think within this context. They must not only think about schools but also about the legal system and economic structures. They must always think through the entire social organism. [...]

NOTE

- * Excerpt from *Every Man an Artist: Talks at Documenta V* by Joseph Beuys ('Jeder Mensch ein Künstler: Gespräche an der Documenta V'), ed. Clara Bodenmann-Ritter (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1972; 6th edition, 1997), pp. 5–20.

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Published in 2007 in the United States by the MIT Press
55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142
<http://mitpress.mit.edu>

First published by I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd in the United Kingdom

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A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

Typeset in Stone Serif by Steve Tribe, Andover
Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Joseph Beuys : the reader / edited and translated by Claudia Mesch and Viola Michely ; with a foreword by Arthur C. Danto.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-262-63351-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

I. Beuys, Joseph—Criticism and interpretation. 2. Beuys, Joseph—Interviews. I. Mesch, Claudia. II. Michely, Viola Maria.

N6888 .B4631666:2007

709.2—dc22

2007010785

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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