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PUMPING HONEY

Joseph Beuys at the *documenta 6*

Arnd Wedemeyer

In 1745, Frederick II, future Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, having married into the British royal family, took an army of 6000 soldiers overseas in order to suppress the Jacobite uprising in Scotland. This first excursion quickly turned into the lucrative business of renting out Hesse's armies, and at the height of Frederick's international career in the mercenary trade, every third soldier fighting the American Revolution had been pressed into service in Hesse-Cassel, where, meanwhile, the profits from a practice that, throughout the eighteenth century, kept fifteen per cent of the male population in uniform, had paid for Europe's first ever museum building, the Museum Fridericianum, designed by the Huguenot architect Simon Louis Du Ry.¹ The novelty of a palatial structure built not for princely habitation but for the public admiration of the prince's riches was underlined when in 1783 a monument to Frederick II was erected on the square in front of the museum, depicting him handling his regalia much like Louis XIV had, surveying the classicist facade of his vacated palace with his stony gaze.²

Frederick's collections reveal a decidedly pastiche-like flavour. Main wings of the museum were devoted to the library and to the collection of antiquities that the court bought up rather indiscriminately in Rome as well as plaster versions of others; but the museum also contained colonial loot, zoological as well as ethnological, Antonio Chi-chi's architectural models made of cork, watches and other 'automata', stuffed birds, gems, historical weaponry, and an entire waxworks of the Landgrave's extended family.³ Its Baroque logic was clear: these human artefacts were to be witnessed as part of an 'artistry' inherent to natural history, an abundance of forms unfolding from infinite creation.⁴

A few decades later in 1810, Jérôme Bonaparte, during his six-year royal rule over Westphalia, commissioned Grandjean de Montigny to remodel the museum and turn it into a parliamentary building — this too being a first in German lands. Du Ry had installed a central double staircase behind the entrance hall, which Montigny's redesign removed

and replaced with a rotunda, the *Salle des États*, filled with curved benches yet dominated by an elaborate throne for the new French king. The interior of this rotunda, like that of most of the Fridericianum, was destroyed in the bombings of World War II, and, after the war, the original function of the stairway was restored in the form of a half spiral within the wall of Montigny's rotunda for the first instalment of the international art exhibit *documenta* in 1955.⁵ For the duration of the one hundred days of the *documenta* 6 in 1977, Joseph Beuys made honey flow from this slightly awkward pit, the well of a destructive *esprit d'escalier*, this site of a sovereignty evacuated many times over.⁶ Beuys, that is, installed his fable of the bees at a purposefully vacuous palace where courtly culture had surrendered to the modern museum, but more specifically even, at the supplemental, feigned, then bombed-out site of popular sovereignty.

Beuys' pronouncements contain ample evidence that he was highly aware of the political significance of the site and intended for a 'honey pump' to modify not only the aesthetic and even representational logics at work in these historically layered mediations of art and politics but also their underlying morphologies. Indeed, the honey pump quickly became the paradigm of Beuys's conception of what he called '*soziale Plastik*'. Modern sculpture, for Beuys, remained governed by a static principle calling for solid materials impervious to environmental influences, promising the longevity of frozen form. Against this static prejudice, Beuys developed his '*Plastische Theorie*', allowing the notion of *Plastik* to range widely: even thought was to count as *Plastik*. At the beginning of the 1970s, Beuys started calling the most advanced instantiation for this plastic principle '*soziale Plastik*', the union of a work of art beyond fetishistic exhibition value and social organizing marked by artistic procedures and potentials.⁷ This ambition is represented in the *documenta* catalogue by a brief statement of Beuys that he had first composed for a 1973 exhibition with Wolf Vostell, Klaus Staack, Hans Haacke, and others at the Kunstverein Hannover. The group show had been entitled 'Art in the Political Struggle [Kunst im politischen Kampf]', and Beuys's text commenced as follows:

Erst unter den Bedingungen einer radikalen Begriffserweiterung gerät Kunst und Arbeit mit ihr in die Möglichkeit heute das zu bewirken was beweist, daß sie die einzige bewirkende, evolutionär-revolutionäre Kraft ist, die fähig wird repressive Wirkungen eines vergreisten und auf der

Todeslinie weiter wurstelnden Gesellschaftssystems zu entbilden um zu bilden: EINEN SOZIALEN ORGANISMUS ALS KUNSTWERK.⁸

Only under the conditions of a radical conceptual expansion, art and working with art gather the capacity to effectuate (*bewirken*) that which demonstrates that it is the only effective (*bewirkende*), evolutionary-revolutionary force that becomes capable to de-form (*entbilden*) the repressive effects (*Wirkungen*) of a decrepit societal system tottering around on the death strip in order to shape (*bilden*): A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART.

This statement has the logic of a manifesto: not only in its resolutely declarative force but in its demonstrative sweep, cascading, toppling into the final capitalized, programmatic noun phrase. Readers first of all notice the political rhetoric of the era, which is appropriated with ease: a radically oppositional stance against a ‘repression’ that is taken as characteristic of a regime that is as helplessly reactive as it is sclerotic.⁹ But upon closer inspection, the peculiarity of Beuys’ statement recoils from the genre it seems to exemplify: the obsessive repetition of the word ‘effect’ (*bewirken*) prolongs its course and renders its declarative verve ineffectual. Yet this retardation of efficacies merely sets the stage for the conceptual pair ‘entbilden/bilden’ (deform/form) in which the genre-typical call of the avant-garde manifesto — promising the emergence of the new from the destruction of the old — is articulated. And while the political diagnosis uses decidedly familiar terms (at least for the 1970s), the notion of ‘Entbildung’ referenced by Beuys will have been anything but familiar. The term was used almost exclusively by Meister Eckhart (and his students), who is also credited with having coined the more consequential term ‘Bildung’. Eckhart indeed created a wide assortment of technical terms based on ‘bilden’ — including ‘entbilden’ but also ‘inbilden (inform)’, ‘überbilden (transform)’, and ‘widerbilden (counterform)’ — that served to articulate his complex doctrine of the image,¹⁰ in which traditional *theologoumena* (man being created in the image of God; the image interdiction understood as ontological incommensurability, etc.) became interpreted in a practical philosophy of mind and enacted in a spiritual exercise.¹¹ ‘Entbilden’ appears also as ‘entbildern’ (*imaginibus nudare*) and hence means both to strip the mind of image content and to deform or sublimate the container, that is, the self.¹² This terminological resonance is significant insofar as it enacts — on the level of the sentence — a linguistic plas-

ticity: The sententiousness of the manifesto is counterbalanced by the inclination towards the arcane. The result again conjures the idea of efficacy, but it is an efficacy of the word spoken without necessarily being heard or understood, an efficacy in reverse, subliminal, subterranean, underground.

There is a weak way to read this oblique invocation of Eckhart's dismantling of the image: It would circle back to the (post-)conceptual moment that stood at the beginning of Beuys's winding sentence: 'a radical conceptual expansion'. The stripping away — not only of representation or mimesis but also of the sensuous matter of the artwork as it was pursued under the sign of the 'conceptual' in the 1960s — would thus return art to a quasi-mystical, that is, void contemplation. But the pair *entbilden/bilden* does not define an artistic practice or the artwork itself. It concerns the more complex — and ultimately 'plastic' — relation of art and (social) whole, installation and context. Thus, as I will try to show, it signals the step out of a familiar logic of mimesis and anti-mimesis, literality and figuration, or abstraction and empathy.

For Beuys, an artwork does not (however monadically) reflect the whole, thematize its relation to an environment, transgress its framing, or intervene in a situation. Instead, he thought of the artwork as a dual operation (*entbilden/bilden*) with which it articulates its relation to a totality.¹³ At a later point of 'Ich durchsuche Feldcharakter', Beuys smoothed this operation into an ellipsis: 'TOTAL WORK OF ART FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER [GESAMTKUNSTWERK ZUKÜNFTIGE GESELLSCHAFTSORDNUNG]'.¹⁴ Indeed, Beuys never tired of pointing out that the only way to think of the total work of art is as the emergence of a social order that would in turn become a work of art. Needless to say, there is little in Beuys's oeuvre that could be mistaken for a blueprint of a utopian social order. There is no encompassing vision; there are only muddled, retarded, decaying efficacies or claims towards efficacy. But they can be made sense of only in reference to such a totality.

This altered, reversed understanding of the total work of art has two important consequences: First, art, in Beuys's view, can no longer be confined by any boundaries of an individual artwork or by the seclusion of a gallery or museum — or even more importantly, by the idea of a microcosm or model, be it of the most ambitious kind. Second, standing thus always already in relation to a whole, art is but the plasticity of this relation, that is, the continual deformation of art within the social.

Art indeed is nothing other than that within a totality which is able to shape itself and its relation to said totality.

A reconstruction of the way in which Beuys's honey pump worked through this relationship to the whole cannot restrict itself to the historical peculiarities of the installation space but must rather take note of the unrivalled intensity with which the political made itself known in 1977. When the *documenta 6* opened and Beuys's honey started to run, seven weeks had passed since the conviction and incarceration of the first generation of RAF members at Stammheim prison and ten weeks since the assassination of Attorney General Siegfried Buback, and one month after the opening, the chairman of the Dresdner Bank, Jürgen Ponto, was assassinated. During the *documenta*, the RAF kidnapped the President of the Employers' Association, Hanns-Martin Schleyer, releasing a barrage of videotaped communiqués that came to dominate the television channels. The *documenta* concluded just two weeks before the abduction of a Lufthansa plane at the hands of Palestinian militants acting in solidarity with the RAF. A newly formed paramilitary unit of the German police stormed the plane in Mogadishu, and the next morning, the Stammheim prisoners were found dead in their cells. Yet another day later, Schleyer was found dead in the trunk of a car in Mulhouse.¹⁵ For its *documenta* issue, published before the opening of the exhibition, the art journal *Kunstforum* featured an extensive interview with Beuys under the title 'The System Nourishes Terrorism in Its Bosom [Das System nährt den Terrorismus am Busen]'. Confronted with this scenario of terrorism and facing the theatrics of a sovereignty reacting to the violent provocation of the RAF by shapeshifting through a modulation of exceptional measures, hastened legal initiatives, and police actions, Beuys was fully aware that the titular situating of art was calling for a cultural revolution — for which his honey pump was to provide neither model nor metaphor but rather a verified engine, transporting 'elemental significance'.¹⁶

Beuys's installation, carrying the full name 'Honey Pump at the Workplace [Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz]', consisted of three components. A progressive cavity pump capable of handling the fluid's viscosity carried 106 litres of honey, diluted with no more than 18 litres of distilled water, from a metal reservoir in the stairwell through a metal pipe to the 17-metre high ceiling of the rotunda.¹⁷ From this apex, the honey travelled through transparent plastic tubing, exiting the stairwell and circulating through a neighbouring room, in which Beuys had

installed his 'Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research', much like the 'Bureau for the Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum' that he had maintained during the *documenta 5* in 1972. The tubing ran around the walls of this space before it returned the honey to the rotunda and its reservoir. Next to the honey pump, without any immediate connection to it, Beuys installed two three-phase standard motors facing each other, which drove an axle that was embedded in 100 kilograms of margarine. The friction and heat of the rotating axle degraded the margarine over time. And finally, in a corner of the rotunda, Beuys had placed three empty pitchers made from bronze.

After the 100 days of the *documenta*, the components of the installation, including the artefacts produced in the university lectures, in particular the thirty blackboards Beuys ordered from the school supply company Pestalozzi-Schuleinrichtungen, were dismantled and are now part of the collection of the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk and re-exhibited on occasion as 'abgelegt' or 'deposited' — a practice Beuys developed in the late 1960s: the sculptural remains of his installations were to be disassembled and reordered geometrically, that is, in classificatory displays reminiscent of natural collections, available for continued exhibition yet marking an archival transformation (an *Entbilden* of sorts) and, as Beuys would insist, returning them to a base materiality.¹⁸ In 1978, the Edition René Block sold twelve multiples, entitled '...from the Machine Room', that contained the margarine in a mason jar and the honey in tin cans; in 1979, some more of the honey was filled into twelve tin buckets and offered for purchase as the multiple 'Give Me Honey' through the Edition Staeck.¹⁹

In a somewhat startling declaration, Beuys pointed out: 'The stairwell contains, properly speaking, one could say — the central organ (*Zentralorgan*).'²⁰ The term, ubiquitous in Cold War years when Western media compulsively attached it to the names of the Party-controlled newspapers of the 'Eastern Bloc', conjoins several seemingly disparate claims. It first of all maintains that the 'publicity' was the proper work of the honey pump and its sculptural ensemble and not of the artwork's interactive, pedagogical component, the 100-day session of the 'Free International University (FIU) for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research' Beuys had founded with Heinrich Böll and Klaus Staeck immediately after the 1973 show 'Art in the Political Struggle' and which in Kassel showcased Rudi Dutschke and other celebrity partici-

pants. The manifesto of the University, co-authored by Beuys and Böll, gives a clue as to this primacy of the pump and its ‘workplace’, inasmuch as it mandated the FIU to question the privileges of the artist’s labour by committing itself to the idea ‘that the structural, formal, and thematic problems of the various work processes should be constantly compared with one another’.²¹ Yet Beuys’s use of the expression ‘Zentralorgan’ marshals not only ideas of publicity and propaganda — undoubtedly with a certain degree of irony — but also the organicist idiom he generally used to define a social order that could come about only through a radical transformation of labour itself, the possibility of which Beuys claimed is plastically manifest in the ‘work’ of art. This returns the logic of Beuys’s installation to the complex invocations of efficacy (*Wirksamkeit*) discussed above — or as it is most commonly characterized or vilified, Beuys’s ‘shamanism’. Locating the central organ in the stairwell, installing the pumping stair-‘well’ as a central organ thus means committing the work of art to an idea of efficacy, however broken or retarded, in which the political unconscious is continually deformed and dismantled. Beuys’s own lecture at the *documenta* instantiation of the FIU, delivered on 6 August 1977, explored this function of the honey pump as a central organ in a curiously suspended analogy of its circulatory function.²²

AESTHETICS, HONEY-GLAZED

The installation of the honey pump turned out to be a great success: it was quickly declared the ‘dominating attraction’ of the entire *documenta*.²³ At the occasion of this, his fourth *documenta*, it is safe to say, Beuys became canonized: 1977 had seen him represented not only at the *documenta* but also at the newly inaugurated massive international sculpture show taking over the city of Münster, parallel to the *documenta* in Kassel.²⁴ Also in 1977, Beuys installed his ‘Richtkräfte einer neuen Gesellschaft (Directing Forces of a New Society)’ at Berlin’s Neue Nationalgalerie, a work consisting of roughly one hundred blackboards inscribed during his 1974 performance at the ICA in London.²⁵ In addition, at the Art Museum Basel, Beuys’s largest work cycle, ‘The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland’, a sculptural assemblage of graphic works continually selected since 1958, was shown for the first time on the continent.²⁶ In 1978, Beuys was made a member of Berlin’s Acad-

emy of the Arts; and in 1979, he was awarded the Kaiserring of the city of Goslar, Germany's most prestigious art prize. The same year, the Guggenheim museum in New York organized the first major retrospective of Beuys's work (an experience he chose not to repeat during his lifetime).²⁷

Since Beuys's death in 1986, his works have continued to be well represented in decisive collections of post-war and contemporary art, his 'deposited' sculptures frequently commanding separate and sizeable spaces: for example, his contribution to the 1977 sculpture show in Münster, 'Unschlitt/Tallow', is now on display at Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof, 'The End of the 20th Century' at Munich's Pinakothek der Moderne, the vast group of works known as the 'Beuys Block' at the Hessische Landesmuseum Darmstadt, 'Plight' at the Centre Pompidou. But it is Beuys's countless multiples — the preferred mode of distribution associated with the Fluxus movement that Beuys joined in 1962 — that ensure his representation in many more collections.²⁸ In stark contrast to the presence of his works, however, Beuys — his persona, its investments and investitures — register as a kind of signpost in discourses on contemporary art, generally warning against the hubris of expansive art practices or signalling the dissolution of the limits of art and the artistic. Alternatively, his revolutionary rhetoric and therapeutic didacticism is lauded as a decisive precursor of relational aesthetics or interactive art practices.²⁹ More than a third of a century after the installation of his honey pump, Beuys's name continues to flow around the contours of art, carried to its outermost perimeter by the progressive cavity pumps of the discourses still running on the polyvalent name 'aesthetics'.

As just such a signpost, Beuys is deployed in a crucial document of Jacques Rancière's 2004 attempt in *Malaise dans l'esthétique* to revisit and resolve some of the critical configurations of neo-avant-garde positions in the 1970s.³⁰ After the radical historiography Rancière presented over the course of the previous two decades, around the turn of the millennium, he turned towards exploring the aesthetic dimension of the political philosophy sketched in his 1995 *La méésentente*.³¹ He first did so in interviews and occasional writings, but the phenomenal success of his 'aesthetics' led to a first synthesis in the 2004 monograph.³² Rancière's aesthetics presents a kind of refurbished historical materialist aesthetics, rooted in the 1970s yet post-millennially prompting a

radical departure from the Kantian paradigm that had been so dominant for the previous two decades.

What made Rancière's venture so successful and would have him commit his efforts to its repeated expansions towards the elegant sweep of his 2011 *Aisthesis* was not so much the renewed promise to demonstrate an ineluctable interdependence of art and politics but more specifically the return to the point at which historical materialist aesthetics had sought to ally itself with the artistic avant-gardes. While the latter seemed to militate against the autonomy of art, art's categorical separation from life, more or less blindly, materialist aesthetics could properly historicize this bourgeois category, thus relativizing it and leading it to its inevitable sublation. By the 1970s, this latter point had been subjected to a good deal of scepticism: contemporary art seemed still to be dominated by radical challenges to the bourgeois domestication of artistic practices, attacks on the notion of the artwork, subversions of art forms and genres, erasures of artistic agency and control; but these efforts, somewhat mysteriously, continued to produce highly marketable artefacts. The failure to overcome the separation of art and life, whether by means of large-scale collective ventures or tiny cells of bodily surrender, had become too blatant to ignore. The most influential wave of suspicion was launched with Peter Bürger's 1974 *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.³³ Following Bürger (at times to the letter), Rancière has likewise operated with the supposedly illuminating differential between the classical modernism of the historical avant-garde and the post-war neo-avant-gardes. Just like Bürger, he has maintained that the autonomy of art requires historicization — but only in the broadest brushstrokes and without thereby challenging the hold of the bourgeois conception of art's autonomy on all contemporary production. The result is a schematic if not rigid sequencing of three epochs: For Bürger these were sacral, courtly, and bourgeois art; for Rancière, these constitute three so-called 'regimes', essentially congruent with Bürger's socio-logical categories: ethical, representational, and aesthetic. But — and this is where Rancière begins to distinguish himself — Bürger's interest was to demonstrate that the avant-garde had ultimately failed to dismantle the bourgeois conception of autonomous art:

The avant-garde intends the abolition of autonomous art by which it means that art is to be integrated into the praxis of life. This has not occurred, and presumably cannot occur, in bourgeois society unless it be as a false sublation of autonomous art.³⁴

Rancière, on the other hand, has not given up that easily. In his ‘Aesthetics as Politics’, he cleverly plays two manifestations of a ‘post-utopian’ disavowal of radical aesthetics against each other. The first, a monumentalization of the artwork’s negativity, whether in terms of Jean-François Lyotard or Theodor W. Adorno, wrestles with the ineffable to sublime effect, its result a rigorous ethicism, and is pitted by Rancière against the second, the post-medium clutter and systematic depotentialization content with the ‘micropolitical’ modesty of, inter alia, Nicolas Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics.³⁵ Rancière’s turn is remarkable — for him, both sides are kicking at the same open door: ‘art and politics do not constitute two permanent, separate realities whereby the issue is to know whether or not they ought to be set in relation.’³⁶ The respective challenges of both post-utopian strategies presuppose the very same, for now inescapable aesthetic regime, understood as a ‘distribution of the sensible’ constitutive both for potentially all art since the eighteenth century as well as the modern polity.³⁷ This constitutive and weakly historicizable and hence contingent distribution of the sensible, however, can diffuse the alleged contradiction Bürger tried to turn against the neo-avant-gardes of the 1960s. For Rancière, there is absolutely no conflict ‘between purity and politicization’,³⁸ or to shift the axis of opposition slightly, between a failed transformative ambition of the avant-garde — transformative to the point of deploying what has been termed ‘anti-aesthetic’ — and the success of the expansive commodification of art.³⁹ Both remain structural possibilities of the same aesthetic ‘regime’.

This magnanimous ‘solution’, however, does little more than adapt the Christianizing logic of the transition from Classical to Romantic art in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, in which Hegel undoes Schiller’s graecomania by turning the sensuous ‘inwardness’ of Christian art against the iconoclastic ‘austerity (*Entsagung*)’ of rational Enlightenment theology.⁴⁰ Rancière’s critique of what he terms the ‘metapolitics of the resistant form’ in particular runs the risk of inheriting the anti-Judaic legacy of Hegel’s aesthetics of reconciliation. Yet more crucially for the question of the honey-contoured boundary of the aesthetic, Rancière can only defuse the fatal contradiction Bürger had tried to turn against the neo-avant-gardes of the 1960s at the price of embracing another, higher paradox, one Rancière traces out of Schiller’s aesthetic education:

The politics of art in the aesthetic regime of art, or rather its metapolitics, is determined by this founding paradox in this regime, art is art insofar as it is also non-art, or is something other than art. We therefore have no need to contrive any pathetic ends for modernity or imagine that a joyous explosion of postmodernity has put an end to the great modernist adventure of art's autonomy or of emancipation through art. There is no postmodern rupture. There is a contradiction that is ordinary and unceasingly at work.⁴¹

This is the point at which Beuys's example gets invoked: as a viscous golden drop in the lineage of the self-abolition of art, its desire to pass into 'craft', 'ordinary labour' from William Morris to the Bauhaus, to the Situationists, and ultimately 'the "social sculpture" of Beuys'.⁴² Rancière's wager is obvious: his emphatic notion of the political successfully staves off any instrumentalization of 'art in the political struggle'. Yet there is a price to be paid: while aesthetic autonomy remains weakly historicized, the relationship between art and politics, their very distinction and distinctness, becomes a transcendental condition of Rancière's schematizations. No future distribution of the sensible will be able to call it into question. The flipside of this essentially conservative 'distribution' of historicization and transcendentalization reveals itself in Rancière's unquestioned and stereotypical invocations of an 'aesthetic promise'. No matter how art is understood in the aesthetic regime, it remains essentially 'in-effectual', always ending on the same promissory note:

Egalitarian promise is enclosed in the work's self-sufficiency, in its indifference to every particular political project and in its refusal to get involved in decorating the mundane world.⁴³

As long as politicized art hews to the promissory nature of the aesthetic, it does not cease to be art; it maintains the productive contradiction. Rancière's aesthetics is contained by the promise, bound by the promise, bounded as a promise. Beuys's art, it should be clear, does not present a utopian cessation of art, a transition of art into life that would be prepared to leave art behind, no simple cancellation of the contradiction Rancière means to contain. For Beuys, the very relation between art and politics was essentially plastic. In almost any determination of his work, Beuys deduced his expanded conception of art from the nature of the sculpture or *Plastik* — as opposed to the traditional notion that presupposes sculpture to give form to stone or metal, or in

Hegel's view, to combine 'plastic directness' with 'heavy matter' (stone or metal), which alone can demonstrate the 'miracle of spirit's giving itself an image of itself in something purely material'.⁴⁴ Against this traditional and, within the order of the arts, most masculinist notion of an artist forcing his form into base matter, Beuys understood sculpture according to its 'character of warmth (*Wärmecharakter*)', that is, according to the interplay of two principles, opposing a 'warm', chaotic potentiality and, at the other end of the spectrum, the 'cold' crystallization of form. They are to be found only in ceaseless mediation:

Everything emerges from chaos. Singular forms come from a complex undirectedness (Ungerichteteten). [...] From this energetic indetermination something has to start moving and come to a form, that is, to many forms, special forms. [...] Form, in this regard, is the counterpole to chaos. This is a polar process. Warmth and cold are polar processes and the mediating element is the element of motion.⁴⁵

Thus, the ideal of the sculpture is no longer oriented towards the immutability of stone: 'The nature of my sculpture is not fixed and finished. Processes continue in most of them: chemical reactions, fermentations, color changes, decay, drying up. Everything is in a state of change.'⁴⁶ The thermal definition of sculpture deploys the language of thermodynamics but does not accept any notion of an irreversible process.⁴⁷ Beuys's understanding of the thermal essence of sculpture (or rather, *Plastik* instead of *Skulptur*) is enacted in his choice of materials — felt, fat, honey, etc. — but this aspect exceeds the physical 'impressions' characteristic of traditional sculpture: 'If I divide the notion of sculpture (*Plastik*) into its basic driving forces, I arrive at action.'⁴⁸ Beuys's *Plastik* thus derives from a primordial plasticity, controlled neither by representation nor impression, which for Beuys quickly acquires what he called an 'anthropological' dimension that in turn demands a revision of the concept of art. A reflection on the plasticity that grounds sculptural form led Beuys to redefine the boundaries of art as essentially plastic, expandable, malleable according to a thermal interaction between art and society:

At the very point at which alienation becomes ensconced between human beings — one could almost say, as a cold sculpture (*Kälteplastik*) — there the sculpture of warmth (*Wärmeplastik*) has to be inserted.⁴⁹

BENJAMIN BUCHLOH'S EXORCISM

Joseph Beuys's 1979 retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in New York provoked immediate disdain among several US-American art critics, revealed most notably in the pages of the journal *October*, which had been founded in 1976 by Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson (with Douglas Crimp joining in 1977).⁵⁰ Benjamin Buchloh also published his by now canonical review of the retrospective in *Artforum* under the title 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique'⁵¹ — 'the cruelest political and psychoanalytic deconstruction of the myth [of Beuys]', as Thierry de Duve later called it.⁵²

It is hard to bring Buchloh's indictments to a coherent summation, since for the most part his attacks seem to have the sole purpose of procuring a conviction on as many counts as possible, ignoring that the bulk of the evidence presented hardly rises to the level of art-critical judgment but is simply copied from the conservative diatribes that Beuys more or less deliberately provoked until his death in 1986. Thus Buchloh, keeping a safe distance from the works exhibited at the Guggenheim — or any works of Beuys, really — felt authorized to state as fact that the 'visual experience' of 'Beuys's works' is 'profoundly dissatisfying'.⁵³ In a fit of cleanliness, he noted that Beuys's use of ugly and abject materials such as the emblematic felt and fat combo, his predilection for 'a particularly obvious kind of brown paint', ought to be considered as evidence of an infantile regression and anal fixation and hence, in a particularly obvious conflation of brown taints, revealed 'every aspect of his work as being totally dependent on and deriving from' the 'period of German fascism'.⁵⁴ Buchloh's pathologizations quickly exceeded the clinically possible: according to him, Beuys was 'a perfidious trickster', a compulsive liar, both 'neurotic' and 'narcissistic', driven by 'compulsive self-exposure',⁵⁵ his work the result of 'his own hypertrophic unconscious processes at the edge of sanity'.⁵⁶ But Buchloh was not content with pathologizing the artist himself or his production. Beuys's success could only be accounted for if this polymorphous deviance was matched in the reception of his work — and indeed, in a particularly ingenious turn of the diatribe, Buchloh found that there had been no reception worthy of the name, only 'fascination', a 'magnetism' resulting 'from a psychic transfer', nothing but 'suggestiveness, the highly associative potential and quasi-magical attraction'.⁵⁷

Buchloh's general wrath notwithstanding, he also lobbed a more respectable, even commonplace set of objections at Beuys, which could be easily interpreted as objections against the honey pump in particular. Beuys certainly never shied away from manifestly symbolic explanations of his works or, as Buchloh puts it, 'integrating the object into the most traditional context of literary and referential representation: *this* object stands for *that* idea, and *that* idea is represented in *this* object'.⁵⁸ A complaint echoed by Eric Michaud, who articulated it with a puzzling confidence in the non-plasticity of 'spoken language' and its distinction from what he generously subsumed under the same general term 'language', namely, 'plastic language':

The disturbing element in Beuys's work is not to be found in his drawings, which have their place in public and private collections throughout the world, nor his 'performances', which have their place within the Fluxus movement and within a general investigation of the limits of art. It lies rather, I believe, in the flood of pronouncements testifying to the privilege that he gave, throughout his lifetime, to spoken over plastic language.⁵⁹

And Beuys, of course, all too happily affirmed that the honey pump related to the circulatory system of the human body. There are nuances to the dismissals. For Michaud, spoken language is the one medium, the only medium that doesn't mix, while Buchloh's version reveals a recidivistic reliance on Hegel's aesthetics and the disdain for symbolic representation enshrined in its sequencing of the history of art. But it is also hard to argue that Beuys relied on any particular one of these identifications in the first place. After all, he equally and enthusiastically declared the honey pump both a model for the transformational possibilities of a generalized economy in which art would replace financial capital and, on the other hand, a signifier for the figure of the 'ether swan'.⁶⁰ Buchloh must have realized that Beuys's willingness to offer up proliferating chains of symbolic representation in no way resulted in a static determination of his work but instead effectively diffused any such effort. But Buchloh, undeterred, only used this insight to add the charge that Beuys's metaphorizing tendencies effected nothing more than an 'opulent nebulosity'. Here, Buchloh's objections take on the logic of the infamous kettle argument, rendering Beuys at the same time so naive as to assign didactically simple meanings to his own work and

so ineffective in doing so that the symbols obsessively accumulate and undermine the symbolic function itself.

But Buchloh's disdain comes into focus as soon as Beuys's open reliance on and allegiance to the obscurantist creeds of Rudolf Steiner is taken into evidence. Buchloh's attack on Beuys in *Artforum* prompted an *October* roundtable (a format popular with the journal). In the discussion with Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, Buchloh insisted on this significance of Steiner for Beuys — 'And that should give us something to...' — only to be interrupted by Michelson: 'It's an enormous clue.'⁶¹ And indeed, many critics have since treated it as a key to Beuys's impenetrable resignifications, the *arcanum* that could arrest the oscillations of what moments before had been considered, to repeat Buchloh's words, 'hypertrophic unconscious processes at the edge of sanity'. But no matter how tightly Buchloh, relying on a not uncommon psychologization of fascism, has packed pathology and ideology, the assumption that Steiner was anything other than another cluster of material for Beuys must still be demonstrated. Thus, de Duve cautioned Buchloh:

Although Beuys's ideology is more than problematic to me, what matters is whether it hijacks the works, or whether the works stand on their own, formally.⁶²

In the case of the honey pump, the hijacking in question was perpetrated by Rudolf Steiner's 1923 lecture 'On the Essence of Bees'. Beuys repeatedly asserted that the honey pumped could just as well have been replaced by blood, an assertion that might sound arbitrary at first but turns out to contain an albeit oblique reference to Steiner:

It didn't have to be honey. It could as well have been blood. But blood would certainly have had a bad effect on people. Honey is something — let's put it this way — that has a gentler effect on human sensitivity (*Empfinden*) and indeed triggers different sensations. This entirely apart from the fact that honey is the result of collective labor in the animal world.⁶³

Steiner's own (not strictly analogous) remarks on the connection between honey and blood appeared in the context of his fantastical analogizing of beehives and human bodies:

Well, the worker bees, they bring home what they collect from the plants, they convert it in their own body into wax and then they effect

this entire wonderful construction of cells. Gentlemen, this is what the blood cells do in the human head, as well! They move from the head into the entire body. [...] The blood that is circulating in the body, it accomplishes the same kind of work as the bees in the hive.⁶⁴

But just how ‘enormous’ exactly is this ‘clue’, which Michelson discerned? Beuys had indeed already explained his interest in bees and made the connection to his theory of plasticity in 1975, in a conversation with the *Rheinische Bienenzeitung*, a beekeepers’ trade publication:

Later I formulated a kind of plastic theory, in which the character of heat (*Wärme*), the sculpture of heat plays a crucial role, which finally expands to include the social realm. [...] And in all these connections, one has to see that thing with the bees.⁶⁵

Indeed, Steiner had pointed out the precariousness of his construction: the honeycomb is obvious, its structure succinct, geometric, law-like — but can the same be argued for the human body? And what does it mean to impute an obscure plastic power to the blood allegedly building the body through its circulation? Steiner modified: ‘Only that in this case you can no longer show that easily that the blood cells are doing this from a kind of wax’.⁶⁶ Does Beuys’s supposed endorsement of Steiner’s theories constitute a commitment to Steiner’s strategy of claiming a higher intuitive insight that has to be shrouded in esoteric secrecy, if only not to appear entirely ridiculous? Or did he use Steiner’s apiarian phantasmagoria in order not just to claim but inhabit the very plasticity Steiner could only hide from view? Beuys’s works do not make any attempt at esoteric division or even initiation — a charge easily levelled against several brands of *Aktionskunst* and performance art; quite on the contrary, they deploy a demonstrative affirmation of exuberant if not spectacular action, its stubbornly unwieldy and degraded remnants or sculptural transformations.

The acknowledged tributaries of Steiner’s follies in Beuys’s modulations of flux(us) and plastic(ities) — enacted, deposited, or spoken — are as ambivalent as they remain intractably layered with other less or more respectable ‘sources’. Thus, for example, Thomas Macho has made an elaborate claim according to which the honey pump owed its existence to fraudulent anthropologist Carlos Castañeda, in whose *The Second Ring of Power* Macho has found the following perhaps not entirely conclusive passage:

A human being, or any other living creature, has a pale yellow glow. Animals are more yellow, humans are more white. But a sorcerer is amber, like clear honey in the sunlight.⁶⁷

Kirsten Claudia Voigt, on the other hand, has insisted that Nietzsche's sweeter honey left a sticky trace in Beuys's early work — a trace that extended all the way to the honey pump.⁶⁸ Thus, to her, a 1954 drawing looks suspiciously like an illustration of *Zarathustra's Prologue*, its address to the sun, which after all invoked the abundance of honey:

Behold! I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey. I need hands that reach out.⁶⁹

With respect to these netted ambivalences and multivalences, the resolute critical stance adopted by Krauss and Michelson, closing ranks with Buchloh, nonetheless began to crack:

Michelson: If Beuys's work is interesting, that is because it is a rehearsal of things very familiar to us; it is essentially an elaborate system of intellectual *bricolage*. Nature, industry, love, money — all those high-minded notions and sacred substances. And then, on the other hand, the charming, naive, touching fascination with electricity — his notion of the battery, for example. [...] Take his proposal of the stag's antlers as the outward manifestation of the circulatory systems. There's something engaging and charming about those efforts.

Buchloh: What is the charm?

Michelson: There's something about the construction of intellectual systems, of intellectual *bricolage*, on any level that has charm — Beuys as a kind of intellectual Facteur Cheval or Grandma Moses. Freud understood the aesthetic aspects of conceptual systems.

This appreciation was immediately and almost farcically cut short:

Krauss: But the enormous public success of Beuys makes the charm problematic and in fact rather appalling.⁷⁰

Michelson's 1979 invocation of Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of *bricolage* is itself 'nebulously ominous'. She had no way of knowing that several handwritten notes of Beuys's (published posthumously in 2000) revolve around the term in close proximity to the honey pump, the first of his *bricolages* (if that's what they are) that was motorized — as *Kunst-*

forum pointed out in its conversation with Beuys, clearly assuming he had thereby violated a kind of primitivist oath, analogous to Bob Dylan's sacrilegious 1965 electrification at the Newport Folk Festival.⁷¹ Beuys sought to determine — and, it would seem, claim for himself — the role of the bricoleur in contradistinction from both the craftsman and the engineer. While the bricoleur, Beuys noted, 'works with his hands' much like the craftsman, he does so using 'devious means / devious paths'. In Beuys's notes, the distinction of bricoleur and engineer follows the classical determination:

This difference is understood as using whatever materials present themselves for the completion of the task in hand[,] not materials especially designated for a special purpose as in the case of the engineer.⁷²

In a television programme about the honey pump that was broadcast during the *documenta*, Beuys insisted on the ever so slight displacement and misappropriation of the machine parts of the installation as calling into question not only the man-machine relationship but, more importantly, the naturalized conceptions of labour, remuneration, and capital.⁷³ This is the mark of Beuys's ambition: he goes all out — he, as he calls it himself, 'totalizes' — but all participating elements are set askew; everything hints at, mocks, and defies the allegorical burden that such totalizing *bricolage* creates. Beuys's notes therefore expand the notion of *bricolage* to keep up with the 'social sculpting':

TAKING THIS SAME BRICOLAGE FROM THE METHODOLOGY OF THE TECHNICAL PLANE TO THE INTELLECTUAL PLANE[,] THE RELATIONSHIP WITH MYTHICAL THOUGHT OR MAGICAL THINKING CAN BE PERCEIVED IN THE POETIC METAPHOR OF A CONSTRUCTION.⁷⁴

Passages such as these — and there are many others — seem to support the assumption that there is no secret authority afloat in Beuys's process, that there is no metaphysical master signifier that would enjoy an exemption from the recycling of materials, nothing to 'hijack his works'.⁷⁵ Even as Beuys seems to have been hungry for meaning and signification, even symbolization, he frequently marked the redrawing of the lines; he asserted, for example, that the honey pump is a diagram of the human body, in which any attention to a supposed symbolic relation eclipses the fluid valences of diagrammatic operations in Beuys's oeuvre and in the workings of the Kassel incarnation of the Free Inter-

national University, for which, after all, Beuys purchased no fewer than 30 double-sided blackboards (which have been preserved). These carefully crafted collisions of exuberant diagrammatic illegibility and blind-sighted symbolist target practice, of totalizing effort and a decidedly anti-monumental flaw in all layers and aspects of his complex creations completely eluded the critics of *October*, who only ever managed to see either one or the other — and only, of course, as naively flawed.

While Buchloh couldn't quite fathom his luck in having found a truly moronic art star to take down, de Duve attempted a half-hearted vindication of Beuys by tossing out the idea of the social sculpture and plasticity rather than trying to make sense of it. For him, only insofar as Beuys's colossal lard heaps can be seen as spectacular failures, could their sublime stink and degradation rehabilitate Beuys: 'What moves me, in the end, is the tragic sense of impossibility that exudes from Beuys's works.'⁷⁶ It would appear that it is from this curious assertion by de Duve that Beuys ought to be seen as 'the last Proletarian', concluding a line of aestheticism lived in failure alone, that the honey was pumped into Rancière's revamped aesthetics.

Even as late as 1997, Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss set aside a bucket of bile for Beuys in their magisterial *Formless: A User's Guide*. Once again, he had to be put to shame for his alleged coprophilic tastelessness, his 'expressionism', 'ritualistic shamanism', a 'drive toward the transcendental', and a 'belief in total assimilation' — and this in a book and concurrent exhibition at the Centre Pompidou mobilizing Georges Bataille for an understanding of contemporary art:

Beuys's allegorical use of substances, and his constant insinuation of his own body into a network of myth, was devoted to this idea of breathing logos into his materials, so that by assuming form they would also be resurrected as meaning.⁷⁷

Apart from the fact that this polemic replaces Beuys's conception of plasticity with a Sunday school version of transubstantiation, it is surprising to see such fervour more than a decade after the artist's demise. It attests to the fact that the prophesies of the 1980 roundtable — which sought to curse Beuys as an artist without a future, without students, without substance, and without resonance — had not exactly been borne out. On the contrary and much to Buchloh's chagrin, Beuys won an unexpected champion shortly after his death in 1986: Bürger declared Beuys an 'avant-gardist after the end of the avant-gardes'.⁷⁸

That is, he granted him an exemption from the predicament diagnosed in Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. He identified in Beuys a frontiersman of sorts. Eluding institutional containment, Beuys suspended, in Bürger's analysis, the very determination of art: 'The attack on the institution of art has given way to a movement that leads away from art, but without leaving it behind.'⁷⁹ The freedom to do so derived from the 'totalized (*totalisierten*)' reach of the expanded conception of art — as Bürger quoted Beuys: 'I wanted to reach art itself. We haven't yet reached art.'⁸⁰

Bürger reconstructed the fundamental tension that drives this paradox (or, I would say, this plasticity) as that between the allegorical impetus that is clearly articulated in the artist's statements but is anchored in a crude, elemental symbolism and the base, yet tenuous materiality of his work, both of which resist the abstraction, refinement, and permanence of allegory.⁸¹ What for Buchloh and Krauss remained a childish regression, a naïve imputation of simple meaning, or a christological redemption of faecal matter, Bürger has read as a carefully staged failure of allegory that calls forth the symbolic form of the artefact:

What is the significance of this discrepancy between the allegorical self-interpretation of the author and the visual experience of the beholder that he has to interpret symbolically? It would certainly be wrong to pit one layer of meaning against the other. The allegory posited by the author cannot be considered a *quantité négligeable*, since it belongs to the work just as the *subscriptio* belongs to the Baroque allegory; nor can the production of meaning on the part of the beholder, which commences from the sense-perception of the work, be disregarded as a merely subjective addition, inasmuch as it will encounter more intersubjective validation than the meaning posited by the author. We are forced to pass back and forth between both levels of signification. The result is an extremely complex structure. [...] What we experience is the constitution and disintegration of allegory all at once.⁸²

Bürger's delicate construction clearly seeks to harvest Walter Benjamin's conception of a ruination proper to allegory in order to apply it in Beuys's case.⁸³ Bürger has correctly identified a logic of cancellation and an ineluctable relation to the whole in Beuys's art. Yet the plastic involvement of the whole that Beuys theorized is categorically different from both the ascendance of symbolic form chased after in Idealist aesthetics and Benjamin's Saturnine descent of ruinous allegory.⁸⁴ Despite

the organicist register that Beuys mobilized, I would argue, his thermal understanding of *Plastik* forecloses the very ‘formation’ of either allegory or symbol.⁸⁵ Beuys’s plasticity is not symbolic; it does not refer the artwork to a metaphysical unity; nor is it allegorical in an even remotely Benjaminian sense. Even in their most iconic moments and in their most passive, deposited, deactivated state, the sculptural remains of Beuys’s oeuvre remain bluntly unemblematic. As revolting or abject as even the most unsympathetic beholder might find Beuys’s sculptures, she will find no mourning at work in them. Even an installation such as the 1974–75 ‘Show Your Wound’ displays a muted anthropomorphism at best.⁸⁶ The plastic potential of Beuys’s work manifests itself neither in ascent (idealist symbol) nor descent (Saturnine allegory) but as plastic expansion or adjustment, in irreducibly oblique metamorphosis.

HONEY IN THE EXPANDED FIELD

The honey pump had a companion piece of sorts. When the city of Münster decided to install contemporary sculptures in public areas throughout the city at the same time as the *documenta 6*,⁸⁷ it had a didactic ambition: a historical component, installed mostly indoors, was to educate the citizenry of Münster, a city of a particularly poignant iconoclastic tradition (one the sculpture show, however, did not end but rather revive) and also to make sense of the contemporary works in historical perspective. Curator Kasper König, put in charge of the exhibition’s contemporary projects, had lived in New York, where he recruited most of the sculptors.⁸⁸ The artists — Carl André, Michael Asher, Donald Judd, Richard Long, Claes Oldenburg, Ulrich Rückriem, and Richard Serra, as well as Beuys — came to Münster and chose the sites for their own works.⁸⁹ Beuys set out to fill the dead space under a passenger ramp with bee’s wax. As Glozer explained:

Beuys refuses to add touches in outdoor areas, considering outdoor sculpture an unnecessary, merely decorative addition. He has walked through Münster, had everything shown to him and finally found a solution that, rather than embellish that which is found outside, turns its critique into art.⁹⁰

To realize his sculpture, entitled ‘Unschlitt/Tallow (Warmth Sculpture, Conceived for Time)’, Beuys settled for a mix of 23 parts stearin, one

part beef fat. The mass could not be poured under the ramp itself, so Beuys had a model built of the negative space underneath the ramp and poured the sculpture in that. After letting the 20-ton mass cool over the course of several weeks, he cut it into slices and arranged them in the courtyard of the Münster museum that had organized the show.⁹¹

In addition to the (compromised) material connection — honey and bee's wax — both works struggle for a complicated kind of 'site-specificity'. Just a year earlier, Beuys's 'Tram Stop', created for the German Pavilion of the 1976 Venice Biennial, had staged and transfigured a childhood scene from Kleve, his hometown, yet had also insisted on relating the installation to its site according to a principle of communicating vessels by drilling a hole from the pavilion floor into the lagoon.⁹² With both 1977 installations/sculptures, Beuys intensified this relation between sculpture and site, albeit in markedly different ways. 'Unschlitt/Tallow' addresses itself to an essential non-place; its monumental failures required displacement and fragmentation — a transformation of reparative effort into sheer bulk. This stands in sharp contrast to not only the elegance and lossless circulation of the honey pump but, even more prominently, to the eminence of place in the Kassel *documenta*. The contrast between the brutalist non-space in Münster and the historically charged stairwell in Kassel is telling, yet it should not hide the commonalities: both site-specific installations lay claim to a certain vacuation, a deformation (*Entbildung*) of the sites themselves.⁹³

In 1979, Rosalind Krauss published an article in *October* that would become one of the most incisive pieces of art criticism of its time.⁹⁴ It assessed the state of contemporary sculpture, but not in order to determine a law of development or a teleological model such as the one Clement Greenberg still sought to provide for modern painting in the 1950s. Krauss embraced the new name 'postmodernism' ('There seems no reason not to use it') yet showed no mercy to the 'pluralist' surrender that it would come to signify.⁹⁵ In a sudden turn away from the methodology of her *Passages of Modern Sculpture*, published in 1977, Krauss aimed for a rigorously structuralist logic that was supposed to open contemporary sculptural production towards a wider array of practices — 'the expanded field' — without letting go of a definitive distinction for avant-garde frontlines. Her starting point was the demise of the monument in Rodin's oeuvre. The modern sculpture of Brancusi and others had proceeded to absorb its pedestal, and mini-

malism had become unmoored in space altogether, celebrating seriality, voids, and frameless intervals:

In being the negative condition of the monument, modernist sculpture had a kind of idealist space to explore, a domain cut off from the project of temporal and spatial representation, a vein that was rich and new and could for a while be profitably mined. But it was a limited vein and, having been opened in the early part of the century, it began by about 1950 to be exhausted. It began, that is, to be experienced more and more as pure negativity.⁹⁶

Under these circumstances, the only possible determination of sculpture had become a set of weak oppositions: not architecture and not landscape. Using a Klein group diagram, Krauss expanded the field of sculpture through a simple structural operation that enriches the binary opposition to a quaternary field. She identified three novel sculptural practices — and naturally found them occupied already, since roughly the late 1960s and early 1970s — which she named ‘site-construction’ (landscape/architecture), ‘marked sites’ (landscape/not-landscape), and ‘axiomatic structures’ (architecture/not-architecture),⁹⁷ with examples being provided, respectively, by, among others, Alice Aycock’s ‘Maze’ (1972), Michael Heizer’s ‘Double Negative’ (1969), and Richard Serra’s disruptions of architectural space.⁹⁸ The Münster projects of 1977 made full use of the field that Krauss mapped out as ‘expanded’. The sculptors had nearly unanimously rejected the label ‘public’ sculpture: Judd had insisted that his concrete rings ‘could just as well be on a ranch’;⁹⁹ Nauman had intended his ‘Square Depression’ to confront ‘private experience with public exposure’;¹⁰⁰ Serra had staged a simple disconnect (‘The observed fact and experience of the work is not the preconceived idea of its construction’).¹⁰¹ Yet these manoeuvres did not reject the site-specific dimension of their installations but rather simply warded off any competing claims. ‘Site construction’ was to be unrivalled, the ‘marked site’ not previously inscribed, the ‘axiomatic structure’ uncompromising.¹⁰²

The gulf between these kinds of occupations of an expanded field still beholden to minimalist idioms and Beuys’s messy slabs of stearin and fat is evident, as is that between the different ways in which the projects constructed, obstructed, or marked their sites. ‘Unschlitt/Tallow’ was not an unprecedented work of art: some of its elements were clearly reminiscent, for example, of Gordon Matta-Clark’s earlier

‘anarchitecture’ and ‘building cuts’.¹⁰³ But for the sculptors in 1977 Münster, as much as for Matta-Clark or anyone else occupying Krauss’s expanded field, Beuys’s conception of ‘plasticity’ was simply unintelligible.

A closer look at Krauss’s rhetoric should help illustrate this departure. It is important not to confuse the ‘expanded’ logical space that Krauss’s structural operation disclosed with the ‘expanded conception of art (erweiterter Kunstbegriff)’ that Beuys, like many others in the 1960s, was conjuring.¹⁰⁴ Krauss wanted to keep pluralism out at all cost, and the way her essay does this is by characterizing the critics’ embrace of pluralism in (anti-)sculptural terms: it is just plain *soft*; art criticism has gone *limp*:

[C]ategories like sculpture and painting have been kneaded and stretched and twisted in an extraordinary demonstration of elasticity, a display of the way a cultural term can be extended to include just about anything.¹⁰⁵

Any ‘infinitely malleable’ understanding of ‘sculpture’ was to be rejected, quite compellingly because it finds itself in the wrong aggregate state. For Krauss, only a ‘solid’ concept of what sculpture can still aspire to deserves to be sculpted solidly.

There are other highly instructive slips in Krauss’s rhetoric, doubling confusions of descriptive and normative registers, of rational and sensuous operations, of critical and plastic language. A notable such *lapsus* occurs in the passage already quoted; it speaks of the exhaustion of the modern sculpture. Before the site can emerge in all its glory and as a substitute medium of sculpture in an expanded field that requires abandoning the classically modern (that is, Greenbergian) ideals of medium-specificity, the modern sculpture of the past for Krauss needs to be determined as ‘essentially nomadic’, tied to a ‘negative condition’ of ‘sitelessness, or homelessness, and absolute loss of place’.¹⁰⁶ What is so remarkable, though, is that in a text very much aware of the binary oppositions it is so ‘forcefully’ and ‘impressively’ trying to shift (‘the built and the not-built, the cultural and the natural’),¹⁰⁷ these oppositions nonetheless find a way of sneaking into its descriptions. And hence the exhaustion of modernism finds itself described as the exhaustion of a natural resource — ‘a vein that was rich and new and could for a while be profitably mined. But it was a limited vein.’¹⁰⁸

The worry about an economic downturn caused by the exhaustion of a natural resource might have been simply irresistible toward the conclusion of the 1970s. The interminable debates about the postmodern, about unfinished projects, about never having been modern — none of these of course involved innocent questions of periodization or historical caesurae. They were all thinly veiled and often enough clumsy concerns about the sustainability of the avant-garde as ‘formation’ — but also about the possibility of the kinds of catastrophic event that had started to be called ‘ecological’. The tragedy of Krauss’s conception lies in her conviction that the only way to fight the pluralist dissipation of avant-garde efforts is to expand the drilling. In the meantime, the founders of the 1977 ‘Sculpture’ exhibition in Münster, Kasper König and Laszlo Glozer, went on to curate the legendary ‘Westkunst’ exhibition in 1981 in Cologne, for which Glozer coined the watchword ‘die unverbrauchte Moderne (modernism unconsumed)’, a slogan that was to invite not the recycling techniques taking hold in pop culture but rather a radically revisionist and decentering historicization of forgotten or elided moments within modernist traditions.¹⁰⁹ In many other cultural contexts as well, the ‘new’ historicisms sprouting up after 1977 attempted an answer to these obsolescent ideas of ‘scarcity’ — of course also with respect to more or less vulgar ideas of cultural canonicity.¹¹⁰

For Buchloh, Beuys represented the rising tide of postmodern sewage. Buchloh was only partly concerned with the base materiality of the mythically morphing Beuys; what he feared even more is the atemporal fissure Beuys stands for:

Ahistoricity, that unconscious or deliberate obliviousness toward the specific conditions that determine the reality of an individual’s being and work in historical time, is the functional basis on which public and private mythologies can be erected, presuming that a public exists that craves myths in proportion to its lack of comprehension of historic actuality.¹¹¹

The very undialectic nature of these enlightened assertions aside, the honey pump represents anything but a private mythology. As we have seen, site-specificity began to dominate Beuys’s work only in 1977, but in the case of the honey pump, this site-specificity became, in addition, the conduit of social plasticity qua historicization. The conspicuous containment if not instrumentalization expressed in the 1973 show title ‘Art in the Political Struggle’ gave way to a temporal plasticity with which Beuys evacuated and radically reconfigured popular sovereignty

in the Fridericianum stairwell. The honey pump and its plasticity address the particular schism of history and politics experienced in 1977, but beyond that they also address the ecologically fraught thematizations of wholes committed to a logic of scarcity.

WHITHER PLASTICITY?

I have sought to arrange three different perspectives onto the 1977 honey pump and Beuys's ambition to understand it as a social sculpture — three different, though connected, contexts that seek to bring three different dimensions of the notion of plasticity into view:

- (1) Plasticity could offer a new way of determining the relation of an evidently relatively autonomous sphere of artistic production to its context — society and the world at large. It should be clear that I agree with Bürger's contention that Beuys did manage to escape the dichotomies of traditional aesthetics. In the face of, on the one hand, those who would like to turn art into a kind of model or training ground in which the free play of their faculties or the rigorous exercise of aesthetic judgment prepares citizens for political freedom and, on the other hand, the 'metapolitical' stance of Rancière, there is another option: the insistence on an immediate relation between art and totality. The question remains: how is the efficacy to be thought that such an 'endorsement' of plasticity seems to require. It should be noted, however, that this critique of an aesthetic clinging to the ineffectual is nothing new in itself.
- (2) Plasticity does not merely concern the relation between art and society or between art and whatever other immanence one would like to construct. The task is to rethink artistic media and modes of signification, as well as what Krauss later came to call the 'post-medium condition' of much of contemporary art, in terms of plasticity.¹¹² Familiar notions (such as allegory or symbol) cannot be presupposed to be neutral with respect to the conceptual demands of plasticity. This is not to ignore the allegorical tendencies of Beuys's materials, as seen by Bürger, but to insist on a criticism capable of accepting the plastic challenge, 'so to speak'.
- (3) To assume that the relations between artwork and the whole can be considered as plastic requires thinking about these relations according to the tenuous ecologies that have come into view at

least since 1977. Plasticity in this context does present itself as an alternative to the logic of scarcity — and this is perhaps nowhere clearer than in Beuys's art and whatever is left of it. No one will mistake the honey pump sputtering in the stairwell of the Fridericianum for a promise of abundance. But however sceptically one might regard the state of the Beuysian body of work at rest, it is certainly not making itself scarce, in any sense of the word. Beuys's works are increasingly marked by a plastic temporality, taking equal exception from the unstructured time of the monument and constructions of celebratory transitoriness, from vitalist survival and anthropomorphizing decay, addressing history (and the historical porosity of the avant-garde) in a variety of other modes: uncontrolled degradation, archival inactivity, exhibited passivity, and many more.

The interpretation of Beuys's ideas offered here — about an expanded conception of art, social sculpture, and the notion of plasticity underwriting both of them — would not have been possible absent the rigorous and expansive pursuit of the concept of plasticity in Catherine Malabou's work and the peculiar recuperation of a thinking of wholes that it has enabled.¹¹³ Needless to say, this is not an issue of conformity: Malabou's thinking of plasticity is not being 'applied' here. It doesn't serve — how could it? — as a mould. Nor is it just the terminological coincidence, Beuys's fondness of the word *Plastik*, that is supposed to allow for Beuys's shabby veneer to be gold-plated (or honey-glazed).¹¹⁴ Malabou has always insisted on an essential, originary terminological efficacy of the notion of plasticity, which according to her emerges as a 'conceptual symptom': 'plasticity wants to become a concept'.¹¹⁵ It is the force of this emergent abstraction, an abstraction owed to emergence, that has inspired the vindication of Beuys's *Plastik* offered here — of his sculptural practice as much as his expansive exploits with the discursive explosiveness of plasticity. Not only do Malabou's inspiring explorations connect an impressive array of disciplines — from metaphysics to neuroscience to queer theory and political philosophy and beyond — but the resulting fabric is of a fundamentally new kind. Plasticity is not only a hatching concept or episteme or paradigm: it has adhesive qualities that affect the very structure of discourse and even threatens to retreat into a proto-discursive potentiality.¹¹⁶ The conceptual foil provided by Malabou has inspired the minimalist reconstruction of Beuys's

conceptions pursued here, muting the obvious spiritualist overtones of much of what Beuys connected to this notion.

The fact that the extreme, almost adhesive compactness of Malabou's central insight has nonetheless yielded such a polymorphously rich series of critical interventions reassures me that the first hunch about Beuys presented here can be expanded considerably. The non-standard access to historicity that the honey pump provided in the peculiar spatiotemporal constellation of accidents assembled in the summer of 1977 in the stairwell of the Fridericianum presents a crucial starting point for thinking the peculiar quasi-pre-emptive 'efficacy' claimed by plasticity. If Marx famously stated that '[h]umans make their own history, but they do not know that they make it', and if the honey pump made history not necessarily because nor in the way it was supposed to make history,¹¹⁷ the honey would have to be routed through very much the same controversions to which Malabou subjects Marx in order to shape the thought of a historicity of the brain.¹¹⁸ The resulting decisive differences between Marx's idea of historical consciousness and Malabou's exhortation to encounter our brain should give a clearer contour to the idea of efficacy that is also the — brownish, felt-supported — crux of Beuys's art.

NOTES

- 1 This standard account of the Landgrave's exploits has been challenged by Charles W. Ingrao, *The Hessian Mercenary State: Ideas, Institutions, and Reform under Frederick II, 1760–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
- 2 The scene of the inauguration of the monument is captured in Johann Heinrich Tischbein the Elder's 1783 painting 'The Dedication of the Monument of Frederick II', Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel, <<http://altmeister.museum-kassel.de/30082/>> [accessed 3 June 2016].
- 3 Measured against standard notions of Enlightenment and modernity, it thus appears as 'a transitional building, combining elements of the early-modern curiosities cabinet with enlightenment science and classical art' (James J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 37).
- 4 The impressive global reach of the collections has recently been documented on the basis of the eighteenth-century visitors' book of the museum: Andrea Linnebach, *Das Museum der Aufklärung und sein Publikum. Kunsthaus und Museum Fridericianum in Kassel im Kontext des historischen Besucherbuches (1769–1796)* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2014).

- 5 Harald Kimpel, *Documenta. Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (Cologne: DuMont, 1997). The stairwell in question has been of nodal significance for almost every instalment of the documenta. A relatively early reflection on its function can be found in Volker Rattemeyer and Renate Petzinger, 'Pars pro toto: Die Geschichte der Documenta am Beispiel des Treppenhauses des Friedericianums', *Kunstforum*, 90 (1987), pp. 334–56.
- 6 The installation is extensively documented in Joseph Beuys, *Honey Is Flowing in All Directions*, ed. by Klaus Staeck (Göttingen: Steidl, 1997).
- 7 Since 1961, Beuys had used the term 'plastic image (plastisches Bild)' for his assemblages, as an alternative to 'object', which was becoming common art world parlance: Kirsten Claudia Voigt, 'Plastisches Bild', in *Beuysnobiscum*, ed. by Harald Szeemann (Hamburg: Philo Fine Arts, 2008), pp. 282–85. Beuys's crucial statements related to his 'plastic theory' are collected in *Soziale Plastik. Materialien zu Joseph Beuys*, ed. by Volker Harlan, Rainer Rappmann, and Peter Schata, 2nd edn (Achberg: Achberger Verlagsanstalt, 1980). Beuys is not consistent in his terminological choices (sculpture has three German names: *Plastik*, *Skulptur*, and *Bildhauerei*); *soziale Plastik* will thus generally be translated as 'social sculpture'.
- 8 Joseph Beuys, 'Ich durchsuche Feldcharakter', first in *Kunst im politischen Kampf: Aufforderung, Anspruch, Wirklichkeit*, ed. by Christos Joachimides and Helmut R. Leppien (Hannover: Kunstverein Hannover, 1973), pp. 30–31. The statement is reprinted without attribution and with minor changes and additions in *Documenta 6, vol. 1: Malerei, Plastik, Performance*, ed. by Manfred Schneckenburger (Kassel: P. Dierichs, 1977), p. 156; as well as in *Soziale Plastik. Materialien zu Joseph Beuys*, ed. by Harlan, Rappmann, and Schata, p. 121; more recently in *Beuys. Die Revolution sind wir*, ed. by Eugen Blume and Catherine Nichols (Göttingen: Steidl, 2008), pp. 270–87. The concept and some of the participant artists of the 1973 show were taken to London by the curator Joachimides, tamed, and restaged in 1974 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts: *Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists*, ed. by Christos Joachimides (London: ICA, 1974). It contains a rather 'free' translation of Beuys's text, entitled 'I Am Searching for Field Character' (p. 48). That translation is not used here. In general, all translations are mine unless a translation is given as reference and no exception is stated.
- 9 The urge to write in the genre of the manifesto can be understood only in the context of the 1973 Hannover group show. The protocols of the artist colloquium — a video-recording of which was playing during the entire exhibition — published in the exhibition catalogue records the artists' resistance against the title suggested by the curators: 'Artists about Politics'. Beuys's choice of the title 'Art in the Political Struggle' was adopted only after Immendorf's suggestion, 'Art in the Anti-imperialist Struggle', failed to achieve unanimous agreement. Beuys prevailed largely because his interpretation, according to which 'political struggle' always also means the struggle of the artist with herself, deflects from the more predictable attempts to define the relevant struggle exclusively as class struggle: *Kunst im politischen Kampf*, ed. by Joachimides and Leppien, p. 7. See

- the reminiscences of one of the curators: Helmut R. Leppien, 'Kunst im politischen Kampf. Hannover 1973', in *dagegen dabei. Texte, Gespräche und Dokumente zu Strategien der Selbstorganisation seit 1968*, ed. by Hans-Christian Dany, Ulrich Dörrie, and Bettina Seffkow (Hamburg: Michael Kellner, 1998), pp. 115–21.
- 10 As Fritz Mauthner noted in *Wörterbuch der Philosophie. Neue Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache*, vol. II (Munich: Georg Müller, 2010), entry 'Mystik', pp. 115–34 (p. 128).
- 11 Wolfgang Wackernagel has attempted a reconstruction of this doctrine in *Ymagine denudari. Ethique de l'image et métaphysique de l'abstraction chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: Vrin, 1991). For a short argument against the prevalent confusion of Eckhart's 'entbilden' with iconoclasm or negative theology, see Wolfgang Wackernagel, 'Subimaginale Versenkung. Meister Eckharts Ethik der Bildergründenden Entbildung', in *Was ist ein Bild?*, ed. by Gottfried Boehm (Munich: Fink, 2006), pp. 184–208.
- 12 'Und doch, wan sie got selben niht ensint und in der sêle und mit der sêle geschaen sint, sô müezen sie ir selbes entbildet werden und in got aleine überbildet.' (Meister Eckhart, 'Liber "Benedictus". Daz Buoch der goetlichen Troestunge', in *Werke II*, ed. by Niklaus Largier (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker-Verlag, 1993), pp. 232–333 (p. 236)). Wackernagel has pointed out the complex filiations from Eckhart's 'entbilden' to Hegel's 'aufheben', both of which were translated by the Latin *tollere*. Wackernagel, 'Subimaginale Versenkung', p. 192.
- 13 This genealogy would have to take into account Beuys's use of the notion 'Gegenbild (counter-image)'. See, for example, Jörg Schellmann and Bernd Klüser, 'Fragen an Joseph Beuys', in *Joseph Beuys. Die Multiples*, ed. by Jörg Schellmann, 7th edn (Munich: Schirmer Mosel, 1997), pp. 9–28. Beuys elaborated: 'Nobody asks whether I'm not interested, rather, in using these elements of felt in order to generate this entire colorful world as a counter-image (*Gegenbild*) within people. [...] For you can only generate after-images or counter-images if you don't do that which is already present, but something that exists as a counter-image — always in a counter-pictorial process (*Gegenbildprozeß*)' (p. 11, my translation).
- 14 In 1983, Harald Szeemann included Beuys in an exhibition at the Kunsthaus Zürich: *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk: Europäische Utopien seit 1800*, ed. by Harald Szeemann and Susanne Haeni (Aarau: Sauerländer, 1983), pp. 421–26.
- 15 The most comprehensive documentation of all of this to date can be found in *Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus*, 2 vols, ed. by Wolfgang Kraushaar (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006).
- 16 Joseph Beuys, 'Das System nährt den Terrorismus am Busen', in *Talk show der documenta 6* (= *Kunstforum*, 21 (1977)), pp. 201–11, in particular p. 203: 'wo an einem Arbeitsplatz ein Bedeutungselement arbeiten soll'.
- 17 Specifications vary greatly in the literature. The ones given here are based on the recollection of the engineers of the pump manufacturer Wangen: 'Beuys' Honigpumpe war made in Wangen', *Wangen heute*, 12 July 2014 <<http://www.wangen>>.

- de/wangen-heute/die-nachricht/nachricht/beuys-honigpumpe-war-made-in-wangen.html> [accessed 9 June 2016].
- 18 See Wouter Weijers, 'Ablage: Über Joseph Beuys' "Straßenbahnhaltestelle" im Kröller-Müller Museum', in *Joseph Beuys, 'Straßenbahnhaltestelle'. Ein Monument für die Zukunft*, ed. by Simone Scholten, Roland Mönig, and Guido de Werd (Kleve: Freundeskreis Museum Kurhaus und Koekkoek-Haus Kleve, 2000), pp. 112–35.
 - 19 *Joseph Beuys, Die Multiples*, ed. by Schellmann, pp. 243, 249. One of these buckets is part of the collection of the Harvard Art Museum: <<http://www.harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/215392>> [accessed 9 June 2016].
 - 20 Beuys, 'Das System nährt den Terrorismus am Busen', p. 206.
 - 21 Joseph Beuys and Heinrich Böll, 'Manifesto for a Free International University (FIU)', in *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America. Writings by and Interviews with the Artist*, ed. by Carin Kuoni (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), pp. 129–34.
 - 22 Joseph Beuys, 'Eintritt in ein Lebewesen', in *Soziale Plastik*, ed. by Harlan Rappmann, and Schata, pp. 123–28.
 - 23 'Documenta: Der süße Seim der Medien', *Der Spiegel*, 20 June 1977, pp. 157–59 (p. 158).
 - 24 *Skulptur: Ausstellung in Münster. Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Schloßgarten, Universität, Aasee, 3.7–13.11.1977*, ed. by Karl Bußmann and Kasper König (Münster: Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe, 1977).
 - 25 *Joseph Beuys: Richtkräfte*, ed. by Christos Joachimides (Berlin: Neue Nationalgalerie / Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1977).
 - 26 It had been exhibited at Oxford: Joseph Beuys, *The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*, ed. by Caroline Tisdall (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1974). The entire cycle of 456 works was only shown posthumously, as the programmatic core of Heiner Bastian's Beuys retrospective, where the catalogue documenting the block turned out far bulkier than the one devoted to his other 'sculptures and objects': *Joseph Beuys, The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*, ed. by Heiner Bastian (Munich: Schirmer Mosel, 1988).
 - 27 Harald Szeemann, 'Der lange Marsch zum Beuysnobiscum', in *Beuysnobiscum*, ed. by Szeemann, pp. 9–14 (p. 10).
 - 28 See *Joseph Beuys, Die Multiples*, ed. by Schellmann.
 - 29 It is hence hardly surprising to see Beuys's 'Ich durchsuche Feldcharakter' included in the volume of the Whitechapel Documents series that addresses the new participatory practices: *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. by Claire Bishop (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2006), pp. 125–26. Beuys also makes frequent appearances in Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Presses du réel, 1998), in English as Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. by Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods, and Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Presses du réel, 2002); yet he is ultimately disavowed for what according to Bourriaud constitutes a utopian and totalizing gesture: The artists he pro-

- motes merely ‘construct models of sociability’, which ‘does not however involve works about “social sculpture” the way Beuys understood it. If these artists do indeed extend the idea of *avant-garde* [...], they are not naïve or cynical enough “to go about things as if” the radical and universalist utopia were still on the agenda. In their respect, we might talk in terms of micro-utopias, and interstices opened up in the social corpus’ (p. 70).
- 30 Jacques Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (Paris: Galilée, 2004), in English as Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).
- 31 Jacques Rancière, *La mésentente: Politique et philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), in English as Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. by Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
- 32 Jacques Rancière's *Le partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000) consists of interviews that present a near complete sketch of his thoughts on aesthetics. For the English, see Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006).
- 33 Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), in English as Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
- 34 Bürger, *Theory of the Avantgarde*, pp. 53–54. Bürger himself raised the question in a footnote to this passage whether Soviet art immediately after the October Revolution might have at least partially reintegrated art into the praxis of life. At the time of their publication, his theses were largely discussed along these lines. See, for example, ‘*Theorie der Avantgarde*’. *Antworten auf Peter Bürgers Bestimmung von Kunst und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft*, ed. by Martin Lüdke (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976).
- 35 Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontent*, pp. 20–21.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 37 Again just like Bürger, Rancière seems undecided on whether to include the Soviet art of the immediate post-revolutionary period. For example, Rancière, *Le partage du sensible*, p. 72; *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 45.
- 38 Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontent*, p. 33.
- 39 *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. by Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983); and its recent reassessment in *Beyond the Aesthetic and the Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. by James Elkins and Harper Montgomery (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013).
- 40 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1969–71), xiv: *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II*, in English as Hegel, *Aesthetics. Lectures on Fine Art I*, trans. by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), part I, section 2, ch. 3.
- 41 Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontent*, p. 36.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 38. Beuys also appears at several points in the collection of Rancière's art criticism for the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, written between

- 1996 and 2005: Jacques Rancière, *Chroniques des temps consensuels* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), in English as Jacques Rancière, *Chronicles of Consensual Times*, trans. by Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010).
- 43 Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontent*, p. 40.
- 44 Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik II*, p. 362; Hegel, *Aesthetics II*, p. 710. Rancière has developed his account of the coincidence of aesthetic autonomy and egalitarian politics from Schiller's description (in *On Aesthetic Education*) of the cold indifference of the so-called Juno Ludovisi, a true-size gypsum copy of which Goethe had dragged from Rome to Weimar.
- 45 'Interview with Joseph Beuys', in *Soziale Plastik*, ed. by Harlan, Rappmann, and Schata, pp. 10–25 (p. 22).
- 46 Joseph Beuys, 'Introduction', in Joseph Beuys and Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), p. 6.
- 47 The question remains whether Beuys meant to reject the laws of thermodynamics or expand them past the familiar concepts of matter. A short summary of Beuys's thoughts on warmth can be found in Tobia Bezzola, 'Wärme', in *Beuysnobiscum*, ed. by Szeemann, pp. 353–54.
- 48 'Interview with Joseph Beuys', p. 22.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 50 For some context, see Dirk Luckow, *Joseph Beuys und die amerikanische Anti-Form-Kunst. Einfluss und Wechselwirkung zwischen Beuys und Morris, Hesse, Nauman, Serra* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1998). An excerpt has been translated under the title 'The Reception of Joseph Beuys in the USA, and Some of Its Cultural/Political and Artistic Assumptions', in *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, ed. and trans. by Claudia Mesch and Viola Michely, foreword by Arthur C. Danto (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 287–303.
- 51 Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, 'Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique', *Artforum*, 18.5 (January 1980), pp. 35–43, now in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 41–64. In the introduction to the volume of his essays, Buchloh somewhat obliquely called his essay 'marked by all the juvenile rage with which a return of the repressed can be encountered in or projected onto culture' (pp. xvii–xxxiii [p. xxi]). Oddly enough, there was decidedly less juvenile sentiment in evidence in Buchloh's earlier 1977 take-down of Beuys in 'Formalism and Historicity: Changing Concepts in American and European Art since 1945', in *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art*, ed. by Anne Rorimer (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1977), pp. 83–111, reprinted as 'Formalism and Historicity', in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), pp. 1–87. Buchloh has kept returning to the scene of the crime, modulating his tone but never wavering in his condemnation: 'Reconsidering Joseph Beuys, Once Again', in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, ed. by Gene Ray and Lukas Beckmann (New York: Distributed Art Publishers; Sarasota: John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 2001), pp. 75–89,

- and '1964a', in *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, ed. by Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp. 480–85.
- 52 Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 449.
- 53 Buchloh, 'Beuys', p. 59.
- 54 Ibid., p. 48.
- 55 Ibid., pp. 47–49.
- 56 Ibid., p. 43.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 43, 53.
- 58 Ibid., p. 52.
- 59 Eric Michaud, 'The End of Art According to Beuys', trans. by Rosalind Krauss, *October*, 45 (Summer 1988), pp. 36–46 (p. 36).
- 60 Beuys on one of the blackboards of the documenta, which became part of 'The Capital Room 1970–1977' (Sammlung Marx, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin); see Heribert Schulz, *Joseph Beuys und der Schwan* (Düsseldorf: Richter & Fey, 2012), pp. 138–49.
- 61 Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, 'Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim', *October*, 12 (Spring 1980), pp. 3–21 (p. 6).
- 62 De Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, p. 449.
- 63 *Joseph Beuys: Documenta, Arbeit*, ed. by Veit Loers and Peter Witzmann (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 1993), pp. 161–62.
- 64 Rudolf Steiner, 'Über das Wesen der Bienen', in Rudolf Steiner, *Gesamtausgabe, B: Vorträge, III: Vorträge und Kurse zu einzelnen Lebensgebieten, Vorträge für die Arbeiter am Goetheanumbau, 5: Mensch und Welt: das Wirken des Geistes in der Natur. Über die Bienen: fünfzehn Vorträge, gehalten vor den Arbeitern am Goetheanumbau in Dornach vom 8. Oktober bis 22. Dezember 1923*, ed. by Paul Gerhard Bellmann (Dornach: Verlag der Rudolf-Steiner-Nachlassverwaltung, 1965), pp. 128–261 (p. 143).
- 65 Joseph Beuys, 'Interview', *Rheinische Bienenzeitung*, 126.12 (1975), pp. 373–77 (p. 373).
- 66 Steiner, 'Über das Wesen der Bienen', p. 143.
- 67 Thomas Macho, 'Wer ist wir? Tiere im Werk von Joseph Beuys', in *Beuys. Die Revolution sind wir*, ed. by Eugen Blume and Catherine Nichols (Göttingen: Steidl, 2008), pp. 338–39 (p. 339).
- 68 Kirsten Claudia Voigt, "'Gib mir Honig". Beuys liest Nietzsche', in *Joseph Beuys. Parallelprozesse: Archäologie einer künstlerischen Praxis*, ed. by Ulrich Müller (Munich: Hirmer, 2012), pp. 52–66. See also her forthcoming monograph *Friedrich Nietzsche und Joseph Beuys. Das autopoietische Subjekt. Von der Artistenmetaphysik zur Freiheitswissenschaft* (Munich: Schirmer Mosel, 2016).
- 69 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 15 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: de Gruyter, 1988), iv: *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p. 11, in English as Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed.

- and trans. by Adrian del Caro; ed. and introduction by Robert Pippin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.
- 70 Buchloh et al., 'Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim', pp. 10–11.
- 71 Beuys, 'Das System nährt den Terrorismus am Busen', p. 203.
- 72 Joseph Beuys, *Das Geheimnis der Knospe zarter Hülle. Texte 1941–1986*, ed. by Eva Beuys (Munich: Schirmer Mosel, 2000), pp. 107–09. Beuys's note is written in English in the original.
- 73 BeuysTV, 'Joseph Beuys — Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz', online video clip, 8 August 2013 <<https://youtu.be/acHt6zxO74Y>> [accessed 16 June 2016], 8:48–9:38.
- 74 Beuys, *Das Geheimnis der Knospe zarter Hülle*, p. 109 (English in the original).
- 75 De Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, p. 449.
- 76 Ibid., p. 450. The thesis was extended into and enriched by a haphazard sociology of the artist for Thierry de Duve's *Cousus de fil d'or. Beuys, Warhol, Klein, Duchamp* (Villeurbanne: Art édition, 1990), in English as Thierry de Duve, *Sewn in the Sweatshops of Marx: Beuys, Warhol, Klein, Duchamp*, trans. by Rosalind Krauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).
- 77 Rosalind Krauss, 'No to... Joseph Beuys', in Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), pp. 143–46 (p. 146).
- 78 Peter Bürger, 'Der Alltag, die Allegorie und die Avantgarde. Bemerkungen mit Rücksicht auf Joseph Beuys', in *Postmoderne: Alltag, Allegorie und Avantgarde*, ed. by Christa Bürger and Peter Bürger (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1987), pp. 196–212 — an expanded version of the essay has been published as 'Der Avantgardist nach dem Ende der Avantgarden: Joseph Beuys', in Peter Bürger, *Das Altern der Moderne. Schriften zur bildenden Kunst* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001), pp. 154–70. A much shorter version of the argument is available in English: 'In the Shadow of Joseph Beuys: Remarks on the Subject of Art and Philosophy Today', in *Joseph Beuys*, ed. by Mesch and Michely, pp. 250–63. Buchloh, with characteristic condescension: 'I find it surprising that a historian like Peter Bürger, who is precisely a specialist of surrealism and romanticism, should discover contemporary art through Beuys...' (Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Jean-François Chevrier, and Catherine David, 'Joseph Beuys and Surrealism, Roundtable', in *Joseph Beuys*, ed. by Mesch and Michely, pp. 320–23 (p. 320)).
- 79 Bürger, 'Der Avantgardist nach dem Ende der Avantgarden', p. 160.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Bürger on this elemental symbolism: 'Beuys fashions himself something like an alphabet from different kinds of matter (Stoffe).' (Ibid., p. 162) This investment of two of Beuys's favourite stuffs, fat and felt, is explored in Monika Wagner, *Das Material der Kunst. Eine andere Geschichte der Moderne* (Munich: Beck, 2001), pp. 197–221.
- 82 Bürger, 'Der Avantgardist nach dem Ende der Avantgarden', p. 165.
- 83 Ibid. p. 167: 'When Benjamin calls allegory a corrective of art, he clearly under-

- stands symbolic form to be constitutive for art. But that means exactly that art in modernity, too, is tied to a metaphysical principle of immediate unity.'
- 84 Peter Bürger, *Zur Kritik der idealistischen Ästhetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983).
- 85 Bürger himself referred to this in a later essay: Peter Bürger, 'Joseph Beuys, das Material und der Tod', in Peter Bürger, *Nach der Avantgarde* (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2014), pp. 111–20. See in particular what he calls Beuys's 'soft' or 'sliding thinking' (pp. 116–18).
- 86 Laszlo Glozer, *Joseph Beuys, 'Zeige deine Wunde'* (Munich: Schellmann & Klüser, 1976). The installation is part of the permanent collection of Munich's Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus.
- 87 Münster's sculpture show has a ten-year cycle and hence accompanies every second documenta.
- 88 For the importance of the 1977 sculpture exhibition, see Florian Waldvogel, *Aspekte des Kuratorischen am Beispiel der Praxis von Kasper König* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2016) and König's own reminiscences in *Best Kunst. Das Leben von Kaspar König in 15 Ausstellungen*, ed. by Carmen Strzelecki and Jörg Streichert (Cologne: Strzelecki Books, 2016).
- 89 König picked an all-male group of nine artists. For budgetary reasons, the projects of Walter de Maria and Bruce Nauman, both of whom had accepted invitations, could not be realized. 1977 was the year de Maria installed his 'Lightning Field' in New Mexico and managed — with great difficulty — to drill a one-kilometre hole in front of the Fridericianum in Kassel and then closed it with his *Vertical Earth Kilometer*, a brass rod one kilometre long.
- 90 Laszlo Glozer, 'Skulpturen für eine Stadt', in *Skulptur*, ed. by Bußmann and König, pp. 231–49.
- 91 The collector Erich Marx moved it from the Municipal Museum Mönchengladbach, where Beuys had installed it, to Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum der Gegenwart in 1996.
- 92 See *Joseph Beuys, 'Straßenbahnhaltestelle'*, ed. by Scholten, Mönig, and de Verd.
- 93 What one could call the intricate 'site-plasticity' of Beuys's practices becomes tangible in Tacita Dean's *Darmstädter Werkblock* (2007, 18 minutes, continuous loop, 16 mm film), meticulously documenting the 'renovation' of the rooms of the Landesmuseum Hessen Darmstadt in which the 'Beuys Block' had been installed (or deposited) by Beuys himself. See Tacita Dean, *Darmstädter Werkblock* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2008).
- 94 Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', *October*, 8 (Spring 1979), pp. 30–44, published subsequently in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 276–90. In 2007, the Princeton School of Architecture organized a conference devoted entirely to Krauss's essay; the proceedings have since been published as a book: *Retracing the Expanded Field: Encounters between Art and Architecture*, ed. by Spyros Papapetros and Julian Rose (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

- 95 Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p. 287.
- 96 Ibid., p. 280.
- 97 Ibid., p. 284.
- 98 Ibid., p. 287.
- 99 *Skulptur*, ed. by Bußmann and König, p. 264.
- 100 Ibid., p. 272.
- 101 Ibid., p. 294.
- 102 The category of ‘site-specificity’ only solidified with the controversy around Richard Serra’s 1987 ‘Arch’ from Manhattan’s Foley Federal Plaza that dragged on until its removal in 1989. See Douglas Crimp’s 1986 essay ‘Redefining Site Specificity’, now in Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum’s Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 150–86. Crimp sought to narrow the concept’s scope by stressing the obstructive function of what Krauss had called ‘axiomatic structures’.
- 103 Pamela M. Lee, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).
- 104 Hal Foster made this point during the discussions of the Princeton conference (*Retracing the Expanded Field*, ed. by Papapetros and Rose, p. 98).
- 105 Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, p. 277.
- 106 Ibid., p. 280.
- 107 Ibid., p. 283.
- 108 Ibid., p. 280.
- 109 *Westkunst: Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939*, ed. by Marcel Baumgartner, Kasper König, and Laszlo Glozer (Cologne: DuMont, 1981). Sigrid Ruby, ‘Wir hatten von den Künstlern gelernt... Ein Interview mit Laszlo Glozer’, *Texte zur Kunst*, 50 (June 2003), pp. 96–105. The conception is essentially the same as Svetlana Boym’s concept of the ‘off-modern’. See Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) and her *Architecture of the Off-Modern* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).
- 110 *Westkunst* thus also became a trailblazer for the post- and de-colonial challenges to prevalent ideas of modernism in the singular, as Okwui Enwezor acknowledged in a discussion with Kasper König in December 2015: ‘Ist Westkunst Weltkunst’, organized by the Academy of the Arts of the World: <<https://vimeo.com/149392220>> [accessed 22 June 2016].
- 111 Buchloh, ‘Beuys’, p. 42.
- 112 Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).
- 113 See in particular Catherine Malabou, *L’avenir de Hegel: Plasticité, temporalité, dialectique* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), in English as Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic*, trans. by Lisabeth During (London: Routledge, 2005).
- 114 Dietmar Rübel has presented a history of modern artistic conceptions of plasticity in his *Plastizität. Eine Kunstgeschichte des Veränderlichen* (Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2012), in which Beuys finds his place, too. Rübel chooses the appro-

priation of new materials as a starting point. His rather loose conception of plasticity, unfortunately, is stretched to include formlessness, evanescence, the soft, the liquid, and the ephemeral.

- 115 Catherine Malabou, 'Ouverture: Le vœu de plasticité', in *Plasticité*, ed. by Catherine Malabou (Paris: Léo Scheer, 2000), pp. 6–25 (p. 7).
- 116 Jacques Derrida was the first to observe these aspects of Malabou's revolutionary prepping of Hegel's plasticity, calling it 'not so much [a] thematic concept[...], but rather [an] operative figure[...], motif[...] or "motor[...]". Jacques Derrida, 'Le temps des Adieux: Heidegger (lu par) Hegel (lu par) Malabou', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 188.1 (1998), pp. 3–47 (p. 18), in English as Jacques Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells: Heidegger (Read by) Hegel (Read by) Malabou', trans. by Joseph D. Cohen, in Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, pp. vii–xlvii (p. xx).
- 117 Beuys claimed as much in the television presentation of the pump cited above: BeuysTV, 'Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz'.
- 118 Catherine Malabou, *Que faire de notre cerveau?* (Paris: Bayard, 2004), in English as Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, trans. by Sebastian Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

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