

Abstract

## Deep ecological aspect in Joseph Beuys' Art

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This paper investigates the deep ecological aspect in Joseph Beuys' art and theory. Modern philosophy, founded by Bacon and Descartes, separated the human from nature. Thereby nature was regarded as object to be dominated and exploited for the sake of human being. Such an anthropocentrism destroyed nature further and further, causing a crisis of ecological system and threatening human existence at the end.

Faced with the total crisis of ecosystem, a new perspective appeared, called 'deep ecology'. It considers the whole biosphere as a system consisting with numerous smaller individual subsystems related organically with one another. In contrast to the previous anthropocentrism, it regards humankind as just one of those subsystems, which cannot maintain the supremacy over the nature any more. In order to keep the ecological balance, each of the subsystems should be protected. The deep ecology also considers the human mind and the society as an ecosystem. Because each system is related with one another, not only the environment but also mind and society should be considered, in order to achieve a healthy, well-balanced ecosystem.

Joseph Beuys is one of the pioneering artists, who noticed the ecological crisis and tried to find a solution in his art, based on the deep ecological perspective. He overcame the dichotomous way of thinking which separates men from nature. Starting from the awareness of the total crisis of our ecosystem and in-depth diagnosis of its cause, his art tried to provide the solution and to practice it. Beuys thought the fundamental cause of the crisis lies in the problem of human mind and society. According to him, in order to solve the problem, a total change of the whole systems, encompassing human mind and social structure is required. This view of Beuys about the ecological problem has a connection with the deep ecological philosophy by Naes, Bateson and Guattari.

The early object art and actions thematized the similarity of dominant operating mechanism between nature, human mind and social system and need for the restoration of the broken connection to each other. Furthermore, he founded some organizations for social movement like the German Student Party and the Green Party and played there a leading role. One of main issue of these organizations was to create an ideal ecological system, through changing human inner world based on creativity and freedom and reforming the social and economic structure of the society. In this way, his concept of extended art as a 'social sculpture' developed into an 'ecological sculpture'. One of the most successful examples was <7000 oak trees> project which was undertaken in Dokumenta 7 in Kassel

1982. In this project, 7000 oak trees were planted throughout Kassel during the five years until the next Dokumenta 1987. However, for him planting trees was only a symbolical action. More significant was the change of the mind of people and the economic system. Therefore, he developed this project into an environmental movement producing posters and holding numerous campaigns.

In <ecological gesamtkunstwerk Hamburg>, one of his latest projects, he targeted the most seriously polluted site Altenwerder in Hamburg and tried to restore this place. Furthermore, he aimed to extend his project into the development of the social organization for ecological movement and research. He also planned to establish a foundation to raise capital that might support the movement. Although he could not realize this project because of public misunderstanding, it apparently brought out the core of his art based on deep ecological thought.

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