

## The extended art of eating: Joseph Beuys' unknown gastrosophy

HARALD LEMKE

**Abstract:** The German artist Joseph Beuys is well known for his notion of “extended art”. This article focuses on Beuys’ lesser known extended “art of eating”, through which we may understand his philosophy of food or gastrosophy. Focusing on three universal food practices and their political and philosophical implications, Beuys presented home cooking as a potential art of living, foodstuffs as art objects, and the ecological rebirth of agriculture as a “social sculpture”. By suggesting that alternative methods of farming and biotechnology are necessary if the global economy and methods of agricultural production are to be run in accordance to principles of social justice and sustainability, Beuysian gastrosophy helped to prepare the humanistic and ecological foundations for Germany’s *Die Grünen* (Green) party — a party of which Beuys was a founding member. For Beuys, modern industrial society’s transformation depended not solely but essentially on the question of whether real changes could be made in agricultural production, our consumption patterns and, ultimately, in the way we eat. This “way” is portrayed by Beuys’ extended art of eating as an ethically or gastrosophically correct everyday cuisine.

**Keywords:** “der erweiterte Kunstbegriff” (extended notion of art), philosophy of food, aesthetics, “eat art”, Joseph Beuys, environmental ethics

### Introduction

Any attempt to discuss a philosophy of food — or “gastrosophy” — must start with the theoretical challenge of a relatively new discipline in Western philosophy, namely food ethics. Given that the *way we eat* is one of the most powerful factors in how humankind interacts with nature, food philosophy plays a central role in bringing global environmental ethics into our everyday lives. The theoretical problem here consists of elaborating a conceptual framework for a food ethics that can define “good food”. In short, how do we eat so that the way we eat is good for the future of humanity and the planet on which we live? Today, increasing numbers of scientific disciplines and theorists are searching for

sustainable answers to this important question.<sup>1</sup> This paper uses a discussion of the German artist Joseph Beuys — or more specifically, a discussion of those of his works which artistically expressed a philosophy of food — to enter the food ethics debate from a different direction.

In portraying Joseph Beuys as a gastrosopher, I seek to present a different side to this well-known artist. Beuys is known as a performance artist, first and foremost, famed for the legendary “actions” and “interventions” such as the “Coyote” (1974) or the “7000 oaks” project (1982) discussed later in this paper, which made him one of the key figures of German post-war art. The public’s imagination with regards to Beuysian aesthetics was seized not by food, but by *fat* and *felt*: many of Beuys’ art objects and installations relied heavily on the natural or symbolic use of these two materials.

The most influential innovative concept associated with the name Joseph Beuys is undoubtedly “des erweiterten Kunstbegriffs”: Beuys’ redefinition of “art” as a free and creative activity that goes beyond the traditional understanding of art. Challenging traditional interpretations of art that “imprison” human creativity in a “narrow” art-world, Beuys’ philosophy sought to “widen” our notion of what artistic activity is all about. Instead of producing objects and works that are meant solely for exhibition in the artificial reality of museums — artworks that have little to do with our everyday life praxis — Beuys *extended* “art” to life, so that creative activity would consist of an “art” of living or a life activity that works (in Beuys’ words) as “eine soziale Skulptur” (social sculpture) — the latter implying the idea that society as a whole is to be regarded as a creation to which all individuals can contribute as autonomous subjects. In other words, Beuys’ extended notion of art essentially reinvented art and artistic activity as a revolutionary way of living: as a way of modeling, forming and creating a “better life” that everyone is able to live. The “art” of cooking and eating was presented by Beuys as a perfect example of social sculpture and everyday life aesthetics, as this paper seeks to show.

For his extension of the notion of what could and should be art to the world of food Beuys became one of the first influential figures in the expanding field of “Eat Art” — a field in which numerous contemporary artists are engaged (Lemke 2007a; Kunstforum International 2002). Before exploring the details of Beuys’ “eat art” further, a simple biography is supplied, not only because these details may be unfamiliar to readers, but also to illustrate the personal and social context that led Beuys to problematize the food system and our way of eating as something important and “revolutionary” in respect to the future of society.

## Beuys — a biography

Born in 1921 in Krefeld, Germany, Joseph Beuys manifested a great interest in science and art in his youth, contemplating a career in medicine before becoming a war pilot in 1940. Seriously wounded several times during the war, he was held as a prisoner-of-war by the British for several months towards its end. His experience of recovering from his wounds (he claimed to have been wrapped in felt and tallow by Tartars trying to keep him warm after he was shot down in the Crimea) profoundly influenced his art.

On his return from the war in 1945, Beuys abandoned his plans for a career in medicine, enrolling instead in Düsseldorf Art Academy to study sculpture. He graduated in 1952, and in the years to follow he focused on drawing and reading — his tastes ranging widely from philosophy, science, poetry and literature to myths. Düsseldorf in the 1960s had become an important centre for contemporary art and Beuys became acquainted with the Fluxus group — a group that emphasized performance as artistic practice. The group's public performances acted as a catalyst for Beuys' "actions" and for his ideas on how art might play a more important role in society. In 1972 Beuys was dismissed from his professorship at the Kunstakademie of Düsseldorf for opening his classes to all-comers in defiance of university regulations restricting the numbers of students allowed to attend lectures. This led him to found the Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research in the same year, with cooperation from Nobel Prize for Literature-winner Heinrich Böll.

Beuys' charismatic presence coupled with his unconventional artistic style — he incorporated ritual movements and sounds along with materials such as food, fat, felt, copper, iron, earth, blood and even dead animals in his works and performances — earned him great notoriety from the 1960s onwards. Using workshops, discussions and "teaching happenings" as part of his oeuvre of extended art, Beuys' objects, installations, and performances won him an increasingly wide audience: his international reputation growing after a large exhibition of his work at the New York Guggenheim in 1979. During the same period, he extended his activities increasingly to political concerns and public calls for wide-ranging social reform or "evolutionary revolution", as he preferred to call it. Beuys also became involved in the creation of several activist groups. Two organizations that owe their present existence to Beuys have been particularly influential: the Free International University of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research and *Die Grünen* (the German Green Party), of which Beuys was a founding member. Beuys designed one of the first voting pamphlets for *Die Grünen*, helping in this way to create their political identity as a "social

sculpture". He also accepted nomination as a Green Party candidate. Through these activities, Beuys participated fully in the German ecological movement's transformation to a political power. He was unusual in this respect, being one of the small number of internationally reputed left-intellectuals including philosophers Herbert Marcuse and Michel Foucault who sought to support the new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s with their philosophical and artistic expressions and arguments.

Beuys died in Düsseldorf in 1986, having spent the last years of his life living in constant activity, participating in dozens of exhibitions and traveling on behalf of these events. One of these trips was to Japan, where an exhibition of Beuys' works was held in Tokyo in 1982.<sup>2</sup>

### **Beuys as a TV-cook**

My portrayal of Beuys as a "gastrosopher" or an "eat-artist" begins with a comparison with Andy Warhol, another famous and unrecognized "Eat-Artist". The American pop-artist Warhol is far better known internationally than the German social-sculptor: famous the world over for the offset reproductions of "Campbell's Soup" which became the ultimate — if semi-ironic — icon for western fast-food society, standardization and mass production.<sup>3</sup> No such image springs so readily to mind in the public imagination with relation to Beuys' artworks, despite the fact that Beuys created comparably strong paradigmatic pictures to match Warhol's soup cans. One such image by Beuys — an image that I consider to be a direct counter-piece to and critical comment on of Andy Warhol's "Campbell's Soup" art-concept — is a television documentary bearing the now-famous title "Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler" ("Everybody is an artist", 1979). The documentary shows Joseph Beuys preparing food in the kitchen of his studio in Düsseldorf, where he had a huge cooker installed. He is filmed as he carefully cleans fresh vegetables, slowly peels potatoes and slices carrots one by one, in the preparation of a simple wholesome meal. Beuys' cooking activity, the food making process and the final presentation of the meal he prepared as an "art work" were the only portions of the documentary to be broadcast on television. The image presented by these sequences was doubtless stronger and more provocative in the early 1970s: here was the well-known avant-garde (and male!) artist Joseph Beuys, simply cooking and exhibiting this ordinary everyday activity to the general public through television as art. In recent decades, practical cooking programs on television and media images showing the preparation of food have become popular worldwide. Beuys, however, was one of the first "TV-cooks", extending (by broadcasting) the notion of art to present the

culinary praxis as a social happening and everyday art.<sup>4</sup> Since then — partly because of Beuys, perhaps — these kinds of images are as popular worldwide as Warhol's "Campbell's soup" pictures.

It is important to understand that Beuys' conceptual intentions were completely different to the television cooking programs and Pop-Eat-Art-entertainment promoted by the cultural industry today. "Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler", the title of Beuys' cooking documentary, is revealing in this respect, setting out in manifesto-like terms the most important and revolutionary idea of Beuys' philosophy. In inviting everyone to become an artist and reinterpreting the "art" of cooking as home cooking and the self-preparation of an ordinary everyday meal, Beuys positioned the activity of cooking centrally within his philosophy of extended art.<sup>5</sup> Later, Beuys' extended notion of art would become mostly associated with spectacular "actions" like his legendary teaching sessions or the highly symbolic planting of 7000 oak trees at the 1982 international art exhibition Documenta 7 in Kassel, Germany. I would argue, however, that Beuys' philosophical concept that art and creative life-praxis should be a constitutive part of our everyday life finds its most perfect representation in his "art of cooking", where the preparation of food offers a genuine type of everyday creativity. A creative activity like cooking depends on an art of living that arises through interaction between the self and the natural and economic world. In particular, cooking for others and dining with others create a "social sculpture" of genuine conviviality: a social life that consists of the joyful experience of shared tasteful meals as a fully lived and daily cultivated aesthetics of life. Beuys was not the first artist/philosopher to emphasize these things. He was, however, one of the few artists to practice an ethically "good cuisine" and artistically dignify such a way of eating as a "good life". Lucrezia de Dominzio Durini, friend and biographer to Beuys, makes the following comment on Beuys' personal culinary praxis: "In his studio in Düsseldorf he prepared food just as he created his works of art. If his friends or collaborators, or important cultural figures, arrived by any chance when it was getting close to lunchtime, the artist, standing beside his huge cooker, would start to weave his culinary spells. In the meantime, discussion would rage" (De Dominzio Durini 1999: 19).

Conceptual approaches in the recent Eat-Art movement can be one-sided in that they specialize on only one of the various factors of food culture. By contrast, Beuysian gastrosophy has a global reach that aesthetically conceptualizes food in a number of ways, three of which are examined in this paper: first, as presented in this section and discussed again in the close of this paper, the art of cooking both as a creative everyday praxis and a form of life-artistic activity available to everyone; second, the usage of foodstuff as material for artistic work;

and third, the production of food as an essential issue of global economy and politics, particularly with regard to the fundamental link between agriculture and eating culture in terms of ecologically sustainable relations to nature.

### **Foodstuffs as art objects**

Joseph Beuys has yet to receive adequate recognition as a key figure among the number of modern artists including Daniel Spoerri, Dieter Roth, Rikrit Tiravanija, Peter Kubelka and Jason Rhoades, all of whom use food as a raw material in their works. Like almost no one else before or since, Beuys integrated the symbolic meaning and material value of foodstuffs in his conceptual thinking, incorporating them as objects, commodities and consumer goods and natural sources of human energy. One example, an object entitled “Zitronen-Batterie” (Capri battery, 1985) deals with food energy issues through the depiction of a lemon fruit that is directly connected with a battery. A second object, a skeleton of a fish entitled “1 a gebratene Fischgräte” (A perfectly grilled fishbone, 1965) used the leftovers of a fish meal as an “object of taste” to indicate that artworks should be understood as mere leftovers of the real activity involved in their creation: that artistic fulfillment lies in the process (or performance) of creation rather than in the artificial presentation of an exhibited “art” object. In contradiction to the traditional notion of art, Beuys wants us to realize that exhibited art objects are nothing more than traces of the lived experience and free creativity that preceded them — mere objectified traces that hint at the creative act of their preparation, and the enjoyment of their taste.

“Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz” (Honey pump at its place of work, 1977) was one of Beuys’ more famous installations. This piece used a pump driven by two motors to force honey through a 17 meter high pipe into a distribution network traversing a series of rooms being used for a hundred days as a “place of work” for talks, speeches and discussions held among working groups and citizens’ action committees from a number of different countries. “Honey pump at its place of work” symbolized first of all Beuys’ role as a supplier of food for thought: he symbolically fed the thinking process in which participants and visitors alike would join. By creating an “organism” that consisted of pipe lines transporting honey from one working place to another, Beuys mimicked the way in which the blood flow in our bodies sustains our ability to work.<sup>6</sup> Beuys’ concern went beyond the proper nutrition of the utopian body: by using honey as an energy stream he showed his symbolic opposition to the prevalence and power of money in the mainstream of modern society. The use of honey was not coincidental: honey for a gastrosopher such as Beuys resonates symbolically with popular

visions of a good life, where humanity enjoys an abundance of food that is enough for all: the mythical “land of milk and honey”.<sup>7</sup>

The above represent just a few examples of the countless works in which Beuys used foodstuffs as art objects and symbolic material. Other artworks made use of apples, beer, sausage, bread, butter, alcohol, dried meat, eggs, peas, cookies, fruits, potatoes, garlic, dough, herbs, German soya-sauce, coffee, wheat, milk, olive oil, oranges, rice, salt, cake, chocolate, mineral water, bacon, tea, soya beans, sugar, mushrooms and so on. By choosing these *ordinary* food stuffs and transferring them into the art world, Beuys valorized them as *important* things. In one meaningful installation, Beuys substituted Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* with Maggi-Würze, a brand of German soya-sauce, to indicate symbolically that a notion of reason should be tasteful rather than “pure”. One way to ensure its “good taste” is to philosophize about culinary taste and food as crucial elements that indicate how well we are living the “good life”. Clearly, Beuys’ choice of foodstuffs was motivated less by personal preferences than by his desire to deliberately and systematically raise our awareness of everyday life and the components of daily life with which we deal constantly, such as the way we eat and how this impacts on nature, society, our bodies and cultural life. Beuys did not restrict his gastrosophy only to the use of food objects and alimentary materials for installation purposes. Instead, Beuys *extended* his artistic activity conceptually to engage with the environmental aspects of the world of food, as we shall see in the following section.

### **Political economy of agriculture and the art of farming**

The extended notion of art as practiced and taught by Beuys essentially made “sculptural objects” of the real life outside the traditional art-world of the museum. By introducing economic questions to the creation of “art”, Beuys’ activity applied a radical and philosophical rethinking of the ethical purpose of global economic life to his extended notion of art. To think about world politics meant for Beuys to think, above all, about food, or in Beuys’ words, to think about salad: “What we use in our kitchens today is contaminated, everybody knows that. . . .The question is, why is that? It has to do with capitalism. How, then, did capitalism emerge? And is there a notion of creativity possible at all, if the products we make, especially those products coming from nature, from agriculture, are already degenerated and ruined like this? Everything seems to be out of order: a new direction is needed. This is where it all starts . . . it starts with the salad we eat” (Beuys, cited in Beil 2002: 224). In other words, all the food we buy and prepare provides a starting point from which each and every one of

us manipulates the global food chain for better or for worse. In this sense, all food carries gastrosophical implications in terms of what and how we eat.

The famous installation “Wirtschaftswerte” (Economic values, 1982) took up these gastrosophical reflections from a more theoretical point of view. The installation consisted of a metallic shelf rack stacked with alimentary products such as packaged wheat, dried beans, canned food and other foodstuffs — in this way, presenting food goods as an important factor of the economic system. By choosing in particular products produced in (at that time still existing) East Germany, Beuys touched on questions concerning possible alternatives to the capitalist economy of industrial agriculture (Kimbrell 2002; Shiva 2000). Beuys elaborated upon this theme through a number of workshops and series of talks in which he initiated discussions about the particularities of the capitalist economy or the theoretical possibilities of a political “third way” beyond West capitalism and East socialism that would contribute to social justice and a sustainable future. In this context, Beuys was one of the first artists or thinkers in the 1970s and early 1980s to integrate environmental ethics into global economic thinking (Kurt 2000).

Beuys' most well-known and ongoing environment-related “social sculpture” is undoubtedly the “7000 oaks” project, initiated in 1982. In this project, Beuys called for the planting of seven thousand trees throughout the greater part of the city, each paired with a columnar basalt marker rising some four feet high. The project's title, *Stadtverwaltung statt Verwaltung*, was both ironic and playful: “Stadt-Verwaltung” indicating a utopian harmony between urban culture (Stadt) and nature (Wald, Verwaltung) and “statt Verwaltung” intended as a criticism (statt) of the predominance of bureaucratic politics (Verwaltung) that paralyzes democratic participation and the art of a political everyday life. By this, Beuys extended artistic activity to environmental problems.

A similar trajectory emerges in a number of Beuys' lesser known activities that dealt explicitly with agriculture and the ecological revolution. During a talk, for instance, Beuys would apply his gastrosophically extended notion of art to economic questions concerning farming practices and the work of the farmer, considered by Beuys to be essentially an artistic creativity. Because, as Beuys explained, “a person like a farmer realizes something truthful when he makes a product that is tremendously important for our life by cultivating the earth, [then] one has to recognize such a person as a creative being in this field of human activity . . . one must accept him as an artist” (Beuys et al. 1986: 115). Usually, if we think of art that deals with the environment and nature, we have in mind something like “land-art” aesthetics or “earthworks” where the artists situate art works in natural surroundings, or integrate those surroundings in the making of



the art work. Beuys, however, focused public attention on agriculture and the necessity of applying environmental thinking to agrarian food production by highlighting the crucial societal position held by farmers and the importance of their work. In a performance that took place in March 1977, Beuys planted potatoes in the front garden of a gallery in the center of Berlin. With a backpack on his back, he “became” a farmer who cultivates his land. He dug up the harvest at the end of the international art show Documenta 6 in October the same year.<sup>8</sup>

For Beuys, being or becoming active in agriculture or horticulture as an art of living demonstrated a political ethos. He comprehended the delicious potatoes harvested in the front garden of the Berlin gallery literally as the natural fruits of a creative resistance against industrial agribusiness and conventional farming methods. The cultivation of one’s own vegetable garden — an idea that existed already in the gastrosophical writings of Rousseau and Nietzsche and to a greater extent, Marx — meant to reclaim control over one’s own life and to ensure a way of producing one’s own food along wholesome lines that subverts mass production and the inferior quality of mass produced products. Beuys’ farming activities were not just limited to occasional performances in the art world: he took his agricultural aesthetics very seriously, articulating his theoretical and philosophical concern for environmental ethics through the practical maintenance of a small vegetable garden next to his studio in Düsseldorf, some farming at a small house in the countryside of Veert (Netherlands) and again, and in particular, on a piece of land in Tuscany, where he practiced the art of farming as an art of living. A close friend recalls the almost kitsch idyll of Beuys’ Tuscan country life: “Here Joseph Beuys turned into a farmer, into a true man of the country. He looked after his plants, prepared the manure heap, made compost with bio-degradable garbage, tidied the lumber and pruned the plants...He burnt things that were of no use and then used the ashes to put in his organic compost heap. He picked vegetables and herbs from his vegetable garden in order to prepare his delicious dishes” (De Dominzio Durini 1999: 22).

## **Foundation for the Rebirth of Agriculture**

Ecological agriculture’s central position in Beuys’s “Wirtschaftsbegriff” or theory of economics is reflected in many of his environmental “actions”. One ambitious program in this respect was the Foundation for the Rebirth of Agriculture research project, initiated during the opening of a branch of the Free International University in Italy in 1978 and continued in 1984 under the title “Difesa della natura” (Defence of nature). The project proposed to investigate alternative methods of agricultural production and biotechnology that would

enable the global economy to be run in accordance to the aims of social justice and sustainability. The Foundation of the Rebirth of Agriculture project was thus related to Beuys's humanistic belief in the capacity of political movements like *Die Grünen* which he likewise hoped to see foster in time an ecological revolution. In each case, Beuys saw the transformation of modern industrial society as depending to a great extent on the basis of real change in agricultural production and the consumption patterns of society — the latter reflected ultimately in the way we eat.

Beuys' complex interventions for an alternative economy to global capitalism included a trip to the tropical Seychelles in 1984, where he worked together with farmers to initiate the first steps to agrarian reform. In this way, Beuys philosophy of a "revolutionary art" of living prefigures crucially the pursuit of justice and sustainability in global agriculture that today's critics of free trade want to see put high on the World Trade Organization's agenda. Likewise, the kind of engagement in civil society envisioned by Beuys as consistent with his notion of extended art and in accordance with its gastrosophical implications in terms of the art of natural farming and ecological food production, finds its place today in many environmental and farmer's movements and non-governmental organizations throughout the world.

### **Becoming a cooking artist**

In closing, I return to the provocative image of Beuys as a TV-cook. By performing the unspectacular activity of peeling potatoes and serving soup, Beuys attributed a concrete, everyday praxis to his concept of an art that is lived. In creating a "social sculpture" of convivial dining with family and friends as a work of the art of living, Beuys manifests an individually practiced creativity and a gastrosophical self-cultivation. The Beuysian art of cooking and eating bypasses the conventional reverence for *haute cuisine* and the chef as the only culturally appreciated expression of culinary aesthetics. A work titled "Der Chef" (1964) clearly demonstrated Beuys' transformation or revolution of the traditional meaning of a good cook. In it, he redefines the chef by emphasizing everyday cuisine as a self-determining life praxis through which anyone can become a good cook — a *chef de cuisine*. As Beuys notes: "The *chef* in the term *Küchenchef* signifies the human head. The word *chef* derives from the head. Everyone has such a head. Everyone has his *chef*. Everyone has the possibility to determine what is going on. Therefore the word *Küchenchef* implies the component of self-determination. This is the meaning of *Chef*" (Beuys, cited in Beil 2002: 246).

If we understand the cooking activity and the making of food as a

gastrosophical art of living, the “art” component of this activity consists of the individual’s activation of his or her own potential “culinary self” through the practice of everyday creativity embodied in a fully lived aesthetics of food. For this, it is not necessary to be or to become a professional cook who produces complicated, expensive and time-consuming masterpieces. Instead, Beuys encourages us to realize that a simple and yet good-tasting meal provides ample expression of an art of eating that anyone can create and live. The preparation of food does not become “art” because the meal is made by a professional cook — a “culinary artist” — but rather because the individual preparing the food becomes creative and engages in a life-artistic activity through the act of cooking. Commercial gastronomy has to meet certain aesthetic forms and complexities to be appreciated and economically supported as a valued work of culinary art. By contrast, the aesthetics of everyday cuisine as taught by Beuys consist of (1) individual creativity in the act of making food, (2) culinary freedom in composing something full of taste (not just feeding hunger out of necessity), and (3) the fully lived art of eating in the enjoyment every day of good, financially affordable food.

Beuys dealt particularly with the topic of living creativity with gastrosophical implications in a performance titled “Sauerkrautpartitur” (sauerkraut score). First performed in Tokyo in 1969, Beuys’ sauerkraut “action” starts with a music stand on which a loose sauerkraut portion is arranged in place of the score. His “music” thus positioned, Beuys would conduct music on stage according to the “sauerkraut principle”. The principle is simple: instead of slavishly obeying aesthetic rules and repeating the “recipes” of musical scores that dictate what is played, the replacement of the score by sauerkraut allows the musician to improvise freely and be artistically creative. Here, as in Beuys’ cooking-art, sauerkraut-aesthetics indicate that artistic activity does not depend on a skillful performance of something that tradition or convention denotes “art”. On the contrary, anyone can become an artist because art in Beuysian terms is nothing more than free creativity, available to everyone to be practiced in any walk of life at any time. The Sauerkrautpartitur performance has another implication. By using sauerkraut, a quintessentially German dish, the work alludes subtly to and subverts the cultural (and racist) stereotyping of Germans in culinary terms as “krauts” — a term which suggests that Germans lack a creative and lived aesthetics of food.

If artistic creativity is not to be subjected to unnecessary rules and prescriptions, the principle “intuition... instead of cookbook”<sup>9</sup> can be applied to the culinary art of living to set cooking practice free from the unimaginative and uncreative applications of recipes. Beuys’ slogan “everyone is an artist” in this

way configures an aesthetic utopia in which any individual is free to develop his or her own *belle cuisine* and personal taste as to what makes good food. Beuys' personal culinary aesthetics prized all that is simple and wholesome. His specialty was a creative dish made of meat and vegetables that he often prepared for his friends. He put layers of various types of meat and vegetables into a big pressure cooker together with lots of coarsely-sliced onions, a lump of lard, whole cloves of garlic, two or three tablespoons of margarine, and big chunks of potato. At the end, he added all the herbs and spices that he could find: rosemary, bay, thyme and sage together with salt, grains of pepper and great quantities of hot chilli pepper. He covered the whole mixture with water, sometimes adding two glasses of good red wine, before cooking it over a low heat. "Within a few minutes the whole studio would be invaded by an intense aroma. He would calmly start to set the table for his dining companions" (De Dominio Durini 1999: 17). Another self-created dish or cooking art work by Beuys, *gesalzener Dorsch à la Veert* — a dish using salted cod which Beuys named after a small village in the Netherlands where he particularly enjoyed the dish because of the access to fresh cod provided by a nearby fishing spot — provided the perfect *conceptual expression* for his gastrosophical art of living that combined delicate taste, personal preference, healthy diet and ecologically political ingredients. What is important here is not so much the choice of dish but rather the activity of cooking as a common occasion to become an artist and be creative on a daily basis. Even a simple meal in this context will taste good and be a true work of art.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Korthals (2004) and Pence (2002). My own discussion of food ethics and gastrosophy are presented in more detail in Lemke (2007a).

<sup>2</sup> Video documentation of Beuys' visit is held at the library of the Institute of Human and Environmental Studies at Kyoto University.

<sup>3</sup> Similar in terms of fast food-related iconography was Warhol's provocative assertion upon his first visit to Japan that "the most beautiful thing in Tokyo is McDonald's".

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that Beuys developed his gastrosophical thinking with conceptual support from other Eat-Artists, receiving particular inspiration from the well-known Eat-Artist Daniel Spoerri (Lemke 2007a).

<sup>5</sup> Echoes of Beuysian food ethics and their application to the art of simple, wholesome home-cooking, at about the same period of time, might be found in the *shizenshoku* (natural food) movement that emerged in Japan in the same period (Ogiya 1988).

<sup>6</sup> To be gastrosophically precise, the source of our physical life and working and thinking force is not our blood, but the food we eat and incorporate (which thereby finally becomes our blood).

<sup>7</sup> There is another philosophical implication worth noting here: honey symbolizes the Fluxist ontology that being can be both solid form and flowing free, like practical activity.

<sup>8</sup> I wrote this paper during a period spent conducting research in Kyoto. This scene therefore carries intriguing associations for me with the art of Japanese gardens. As suggested by Knight (1997), the Zen-aesthetic emptiness of stone gardens is generally what one first thinks of when reflecting upon the art of Japanese gardens. From a Beuysian point of view, however, one might argue that the *real*, economically meaningful *art of (urban) gardening*

takes place instead in the diverse vegetable gardens, still to be found in Kyoto neighborhoods — urban gardens which have their counterpart in many cities in the world. In this sense, in keeping with a gastrosophical understanding of art, a vital counterpart to the museum-like stone gardens revered as a traditional, aesthetized notion of garden art might be found in the art of small-scale farming. In other words, an *authentic, actually lived* “art of Japanese gardens” survives in those vegetable gardens, deeply embedded in urban life, and symbolizing a remaining “close relation” of the Japanese to nature. Here, I perceive parallels between Beuysian gastrosophy and the “philosophy of natural farming” espoused by Japanese farmer and philosopher, Fukuoka Masanobu (Fukuoka 1987).

<sup>9</sup> This is the subtitle of the object *Intuition* (1969).

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**Harald Lemke** is a lecturer at the University of Hamburg and University of Lüneburg, specializing in practical philosophy and aesthetics. Having finished his doctoral thesis in 1999, he received his Habilitation in 2006. A fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, he was a fellow of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science from 2004 to 2006, during which time he undertook philosophical research at the Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, working with Prof. Tadashi Ogawa.