

Tomislav Šola

**ESSAYS ON  
MUSEUMS  
AND THEIR  
THEORY**

Towards a cybernetic museum

The Finnish Museums Association

Tomislav Šola

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Tomislav Šola is the full time Professor of Museology at the University of Zagreb (Faculty of Humanities, Department of Information Sciences, Chair of Museology), - teaching subjects: Museum and its Users, and Contemporary Museums. He is head of the Post-graduate study of Museology. Born in Zagreb, Croatia, in 1948, he was educated as art historian at University of Zagreb, where he also studied Journalism and Museology at the post-graduate level. His museum career began as a curator at (today) Contemporary art Museum in Zagreb, where he worked seven years. Apart from other minor instances, during that time he was granted the French Government research scholarship which he spent working in ICOM Documentation centre and attending the courses of G.H. Riviere at Sorbonne. Next seven years of his career he has been Director of the Museum Documentation Centre, - the only institution of the kind in former Yugoslavia. He has done his PhD in Museology at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, where he now teaches Museology at the Post-graduate study. He published two books, numerous articles and catalogues on art, and also extensively upon Museology (some 250 items in books, professional magazines, and newspapers). His writings have been translated into eleven languages. He has participated with papers in 17 international events, lectured widely in numerous countries (about 150 hours; regularly at ISSOM, Masaryk University in Brno and European Heritage School in Barcelona, where he is a member of Academic board) and organized three conferences of international committees of ICOM. He is Programme Director of International Summer School for Heritage Studies (ISSHS), Jyvaskyla, Finland.

He has occupied important offices within the museum profession, both nationally and internationally, among which chairmanship of the Yugoslav National Committee of ICOM-Unesco (World's museum organization), membership of the Executive Council of ICOM, and the secretarial position of ICOFOM/ICOM (International Committee of Museology) should be stipulated. He is presently a member of the Advisory Editorial Board of Museum International (Unesco), member of the Committee of EMYA (European Museum of the Year Award) and the author of its annual event in Barcelona. As international consultant placed in Slovenia he has done numerous projects out of which three are under realization.

## PREVAILING CHARACTERISTICS AND ORIENTATIONS OF TRADITIONAL MUSEUMS

product orientation  
object orientation  
analytical  
specific  
specialized  
passeist  
rational  
scientific  
formal  
solemn  
normative  
finite  
final definitions  
affirmation of order  
preference of positivism

"objects speak for themselves"  
estheticism  
production of knowledge  
dissemination of knowledge

informative  
educational

## PREVAILING CHARACTERISTICS AND ORIENTATIONS OF REFORMED MUSEUMS

process orientation  
concept orientation  
synthetical  
contextual  
multidisciplinary, complex  
futurist  
emotional  
popular  
informal  
relaxed  
flexible  
opened  
evolutive, opened definitions  
preferes organization  
expresses and provokes dilemma, questions and speculation  
sees objects as interpretive start  
information space design  
mediation of experience and wisdom  
encouragement of understanding and creative ability  
communicative  
"cybernetic", corrective

impressive  
prestigious  
extensive  
possesive, conquerous  
using technology to ameliorate the existing methods and procedures  
seeing museum as a closed complex

serving the preponderant forces of the society  
presenting research

collecting "eternalia"  
implying the logic of good investment and market value  
nourishing the myth of the original object  
presenting the scientific truth

scientific orientation comprizing users  
static  
objectivity through historical distance

"working for the future generations"  
heritage as "invaluable relics"  
conflict-free notion of the past

heritage of the privileged, important, wealthy, exceptional  
friendly  
modest  
territorial, communal  
protective  
using technology as transforming the museum medium itself  
seeing building as physical centre of the action  
seerving the comunity and common interests  
takig research as a basis for the presentation  
collecting "ephemeralia" and "quotidiana"  
excluding the material value judgement

accepting substitutes and support material  
uses scientific argument to present visions, questions, doubts, possibilities  
users orientation comprizing science  
dynamic  
objectivity through honest risk of real-time evaluation  
acting for present users  
heritage as viable, collective memory  
past as history of confronted interests and possibilities  
heritage as totality

Facing the New Age

ESSAYS ON MUSEUMS AND THEIR THEORY

BY TOMISLAV ŠOLA

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Curriculum vitae to the beginning or to the end of the book

## FOREWORD

(Lectori benevolo salutem)

It is too easy, and should I admit, rather irresponsible in its benevolence or criticism, to talk about the others. I have experienced that often enough as museum curator, art critic and museologist. What can one say introducing one's written words? That one is sorry they only reflect the desire and not the achievement? One can be indeed defeated by the resistance of the matter, - a painful experience any creative person will know. Contrary to ambition, one often catches only glimpses of Truth, - enough though to learn how unattainable it stays to most of our powers.

Having been given very numerous chances internationally to talk to students and my fellow professionals, I must have appropriated an instinctive psychology of a wandering preacher. As a museological Franciscan from the very province of what is the empire of our professional religion, I am grateful that even Jesuits among ourselves listened to me without objecting (but, what worries me is probability that my mind was not all that different from theirs). I have had changing interests and never a programme which, once the chance is offered, would be easily wrapped into a book. The "sermons" thus reflect the haphazard nature of invitations and the circumstances they were produced in. As to the themes chosen, they sometimes represent better the interests of my hosts, - than some personal scheme behind. I would find it ugly and selfish to follow my own plan while pretending to respond to somebody else's needs - a philosophy that should, at their expense, govern museums respectively. There is also some naive professional pride in trying to respond, to any proposed interest, but it is also fair acceptance of challenge that encourages and forces further reflection. When lecturing internationally, I have thought correct, whenever there was time, to bring with me the written text of my lecture to be distributed to the audience. Once there and done, it made little sense to read it (most of us being terrible readers anyhow). I therefore always took a risk and pleasure to improvise: this part, "lost" in the air, is the true product of our art. It should remind all of us in business of heritage that we should retain and develop our obvious resemblance to actors and artists, keeping the science a solid basis of our discourse. In my luxury to act naturally, I have therefore failed to make more substantial a contribution to Museology (whatever that may mean any more).

This collection of papers in English, scattered in themes and levels, reflects only a part of my professional communication across some ten years. Some texts received little corrections which did not change their substance. A few texts are recent and made only to provide a thematic round up. Fifteen years of museums practice behind me will never make me a true academic nor will I be able, after seven years of teaching to return innocent any more to the harsh reality of museum job. Being in between, may acquire an air of curiosity but rarely contributes to sympathy, and I am afraid that neither the esoteric scientist nor the hardened pragmatist will take much pleasure in reading these texts. They all bear, alas, one deficiency more: all written directly in English cannot but demonstrate my poor command of that extraordinary language. Had it not been for the interest and persuasion of my dear Finnish colleagues (Janne Vilkkuna being decisive among them), these texts, made for different occasions would never appear as a collection in front of you. For the risk taken I owe them still a better product, whereas to you who care to continue reading I owe much gratitude. It is always a privilege to be able to speak to others and share with them the concerns which transform our scientific obligations into poetical Utopia.

In the world of today's museums, some twelve years since the first text from this collection has appeared, is a very long time. We change but what has been written stays. Although I would not deny anything I would change a lot. I have always tried to be at the forefront of our professional history and I hope even this partial choice of texts might illustrate the fact, at least to those who are familiar with the last decade of the professional reflection. It would be usable to anybody interested in development of ideas in our profession(s?); others, trying to find some inspiration, either by opposing or by agreeing, might find my paths interesting enough to take a stroll. Cut through the weeds, bushes and barriers, as it seemed to me at the time, these paths should give however an impression of effortless action. If that would be so, it would imply well done job and be evidence of the enjoyment it gave me. I am still amazed, in my professional role, for being paid for what I would be doing anyhow. If this shows in the words and ideas that follow, - be, indeed, benevolent, - dear reader, and pardon me for so many imperfections that found their way into the final product.

Tomislav Šola

## INTRODUCTION

1. Six questions of an interested layman
2. Identity – a reflection on a crucial problem for museums
3. The Prologue to a cybernetic museum

## 1. SIX QUESTIONS OF AN INTERESTED LAYMAN

Having performed on all sides of what concerns the life and destiny of museums, and being myself a passionate museum goer, I often felt an urge to anticipate the questions that our users, both actual and possible could put up. One has to remember that those laymen are often in the position to decide upon the destiny of our profession and its objectives, either as tax payers or as consumers of our products. Being a part of established culture, museums are rarely publicly questioned which makes them rely upon their traditional public or upon guesses whenever they want to meet the true interests of their community. Lacking thus the indispensable feed-back, museums are in a delicate and vulnerable position as, less and less their destiny is decided upon only by the powerful administration. Any museum consultant has been too often faced by decision makers who have neither knowledge of what is heritage and why it is needed, nor the patience to listen to the long professional explanations, let alone posing questions. There are many among the laity who think they know too much to pose them while others think they know too little to admit it.

Do we need museums at all?

Yes, we do but not because it is a notorious feature of any cultural society, as it is usually understood. The reasons are deeper and more important. Museums are there to help us continue with our identity, to secure the vital presence of the collective memory. As such, they are a constant reflection upon the past experience and, therefore, a possible corrective in our present and future. Museums contribute to our self-knowing and are effective means to know the world around us both in its spacial and temporal dimension. In this sense museums are a vital agent of any society. Without them, and kindred institutions, we would be exposed to the loss of the vital forces that guide the change and make a sustainable development possible. It would lead to the loss of identity with all the fatal consequences leading to decadence and disappearance.

Why do we witness the explosion in museum growth?

Museums are effective defenders of identity, - any identity that they stand for: a painter, an archeological find, a city, a region, a craft, a theme of natural sciences...The unprecedented rate of change in the contemporary world is virtually endangering the existence of any identity we can think of. In some reverse deduction, whenever one sees a museum happen, some identity is in peril. Moreover - they resemble a pacemaker as they are being installed wherever there is a dying heart of heritage. Museum growth is therefore an immediate response, specific to our culture, when curing for the disappearance of features that (we feel) constitute our identity or, more widely speaking, of our environment. Statistically speaking, we witness a birth of a new museum in the developed countries of Europe at the frightening rhythm of one to two per week which illustrates well the extent of the drama. Knowing that mass inscenation and musealization belong to the legitimate characteristics of the post-modern paradigm does neither explain nor evaluate this fact. The reformist museological theses would admit that "museums grow like mushrooms", but points out to the fact that not all of them are eatable. Why? Because the problem is there, and museums are rightfully perceived as a way to protect the collective self from it. Yet, the profession concerned gives but a limited range of solutions which all (with exceptions, tough) belong to the former times and their circumstances. It is therefore true that museum response is numerically correct but

qualitatively insufficient and inapt.

Why should museums be discussed outside the profession itself?

Because, the profession is facing a very serious conceptual crisis. The fact that museums grow in numbers proves only that they are needed and by no means that those museums are needed. This profession is, by the nature of its endeavour, very vulnerable to traditionalism, all sorts of passeism, and quite apt to sway into some conservative conception of the world. Museum profession is one among the very rare ones that is described even in the legislative acts as of a very specific and top important for any society and community. Yet, most of the curators are only trained in their basic academic discipline while their profession is learnt in practice - costly and highly unrational. Furthermore, museums are needed in the dramatic changes of the everyday life, which requires much wider consensus about their role, and consequently, of their profile, responsibilities and their financing. Museums should be better known by all the decisive forces of the society as they represent a mighty tool for many purposes. So far, the capacity of museums was used mostly in the sense of science (inner professional opportunism) and in the sense of prestige (external opportunism of the preponderant forces of the society). Education, communication or participation in the development stay, partly or completely, unnoticed chances. Out of numerous reasons this profession has been so much self neglected that it might require external help to take up the full scope of its responsibilities. Being of strategic importance in the survival of any community, museum and related professions, should hear what is expected from them, i.e. to what problem they should give a satisfactory answer and with what pragmatic effect.

How can museums serve development?

Within the already mentioned paradigm of the contemporary society there are many things which call for different institutional and non-institutional action on the field of collective experience. The time is post-historic and post-modern. The historical distance has ceased to exist as we cannot afford it. We accepted the "processual" judgement as the part of the required immediate action. Museums, archives and alike are places where the collective experience is stored. There is no use saying that it will serve well our descendants. It has to serve us now, as we have to be able to keep this world in its usable shape. We are getting back to some values of the primitive society inasmuch as having an urgent need for the multidisciplinary experience that can help in the present decision making. On the other hand, the democratic procedure requires not only educated but also sensibilized population, the one aware of the full impact of their decisions. An enormous task in which museums play only a part, but the part being played actually is alarmingly small. Museums, as data banks of tridimensional objects, as a sort of tridimensional story on many a subject, act as a sort of a "biblia pauperum". In a quite important sense they act as a sort of a cultural blood bank and sort of a golden countervalue guarantee of its relevance. The structural "leakage" of once very divided dichotomy of development between scientific/economic forces of change on one side and cultural forces of adaptation is now causing even reverse methodology: some economic development programmes start with cultural projects. Culture is more and more business-like while science and technology are being culturalized. Important and internationally recognized museum projects become an attraction and creators of a stimulative atmosphere. It has been calculated that every job in museum creates 1,7 jobs outside, but this analysis could not measure the indirect effects of self-consciousness, local pride, international image,

recognition and dignity - which all could be decisive factors in some developmental schemes. Culture has always been indispensable underlying structure for any development. In economic growth it could help by supporting the local know-how, by attracting prestigious investment, by creating stimulating atmosphere or by requiring complementary services.

What should the decision makers do about museums?

Help them. Once recognized as important for the society, but not only as a prestigious ornament and a showroom of the local achievements, museums should be regarded as one of the priorities. The factory, a certain technology or things alike can be bought or borrowed, together with the appropriate experience and know-how. How can one obtain a culture, the lost identity, the specificity that is so fruitfully reflected on everything we do? The tourist industry knows dramatically well how the most ordinary human reactions make the basis of an important public revenue: countries without distinctive character are hardly attractive for others. They are used (which implies disgrace and poverty), not truly visited (which would imply dignity and revenue). Like educational system, the heritage care network that includes museums should be an object of the constant governmental and cultural policy care. The collective experience of the past, if analysed correctly and presented creatively will act as, indeed, "magistra vitae", a sort of a usable wisdom. To do that, museums have to be recognized as such, have to be supported so that they become able to assume their mission. This will eventually mean their autonomization so that they are not dominated by the preferred projections of the different power structures.

What is going on in the world of museums?

Apart from the unprecedented growth, we are witnessing the raising variety in this quantity. But, to tell the truth, it is becoming difficult to say what is growing and with what effects. The professional world is seeing that old definitions are practically useless, and that the former institutional or even theoretical constructions are obsolete. This total change happening in front of our eyes is however a gradual process, so it may not look dramatical, and can therefore be easily minimized. Museums tacitly consented to play the role of a panache of the helmet of the conquerous mankind. They actually assumed more the role of the scribe to the ruler than a partner with some corrective tasks to do. Becoming introvert and self-occupied museums demonstrated the bureaucratic nature of its concern. They maybe have tasks to perform, but out of that busy activity they do not see that there is a mission to be fulfilled. That is true when speaking about the majority. This very majority, feeling that there would be a need for a theory to match its importance, invented Museology at its proper science. A hundred years have been spent in trying to make it a real science and the failure might finally become obvious. The "constructional error" of this clumsy vehicle is the insistence upon the institution, museal institution as the central problem of this discipline. Now, for some two decades, coinciding with the upsurge of ecomuseums we may say that a shift is taking place that will make all the development logical and understandable and consequently change many a definition. The great convergence of the heritage concerned institutional sector has already started due to the inevitable, double-natured logic: the logic of the unifying mission and the logic of the informatics. Rearranging these institutional forces will gradually build up a *metanoia* of the entire set of professions, not meaning indeed that any of them will diminish. The changes will adjust and amend the present state as well, but, indeed, apply seriously only to those to come, institutions and professionals respectively. What is already being required

from heritage care is the demonstration of the cumulative force and therefore it will happen. Thus, the newly established institutions will not only "do the same old job with the new means" (K.Hudson) in some sort of a technological disguise, but will have to be changed by this very technology (as quarter of a century ago, we heard by McLuhan that "the medium is the message"). The magical word of the future will be "heritage", which will give its colouring to the new types of institutions, new procedures and new performance. Traditional museums and "information space museums" will coexist within the context of the new amalgamated media of heritage communication. Vanity and the wisdom will take the form of creative expression inspiring the vitality and making the survival possible. The future is already there; it is only that we have to recognize it and adjust it to the best of our needs.

## 2. IDENTITY - reflection on a crucial problem for museums

Identity, as any serious analysis would show, is a complex matter. It may be easily a true name for the object of museums. The traditional museum piece, an item, a three-dimensional fact, is only a data of a complex of museum information, of a message. We do not have museums because of the objects they contain but because of the concepts of ideas that these objects help to convey. We are lately rather successful in getting rid of professional myths and prejudices, so there is hope again for museums to survive through the inevitable conceptual, technological and informational transformation.

The majority of the problems of the contemporary world, as has been the case many times before, can be regarded as identity problems. The clash between the two masses of different identity may amount to a war even. The era of Great Transition or of the Great Anxiety (as A. Toffler would say) is era of change. There is no easy way to live out the changes, to catch up with them, to rationalize them, as we were trying to do so far. The result of these powerful forces of change is the global identity crisis. Totality indeed means that the crisis does not leave out anything: there is no area of theory or practice that is not constantly shaken under the pressure of fundamental changes. We were accustomed to accept the warning within so called cultural identity because it seems to be the essential part, at least the most tender one, within the psychosphere. But what about nature? Changes happen day after day in front of our eyes and we seem to cope with them; the question is, however, do we agree with them, can we agree with them and what do we do if the answers are "no" as it often the case. To put it in the most simple way - the identity we should be speaking about can be divided into those two categories, that of culture and that of nature. When trying to define the relationship between identity and museology, we must take both phenomena in their widest scope in order to arrive at relevant conclusions. In our sense identity is anything that contains enough centripetal, cohesive forces, anything that has enough arguments to be regarded as a whole. The difficulty arises from the fact that Museology is not a defined science or, more clearly, there are quite a few definitions and no consensus. That is why we shall again have difficulty in progressing towards defining any further relation of Museology to other phenomena.

It is clear, however, that after a hundred years we are still speaking of the "status nascendi" of Museology. It is clear that Museology is still too much tied up by its very name. It should be clear that this is not inherent only to traditional museums: if we narrow its scope it becomes sort of Museography; if we widen its scope it will certainly surpass the traditional museum. So if we accept the risk of making Museology a theoretical body that covers diverse agents of the similar area of human activity, we may arrive at defining, not the institution, but the phenomenon that is the basis of Museology. We should call it the total heritage, the total identity. Museology is not about techniques but concepts; it must be an active, corrective, cybernetic philosophy, - and thus reflect or structure the mission of the contemporary museum, depending upon the case.

The message of museums is to prove that we are not connected to the past only through myths and mementos - that the past is the soil from which any identity grows. It also demonstrates that the consciousness of the past is by itself the form of affirming identity, and therefore the form of a survival model. The predominant feature of the museum mission is the defence of identity, i.e. its continuity. If the museum treats only the past without linking it to the present, the pejorative name of a morgue suits it well. Museums of the past containing only silent objects do not serve the cause of life but that of death. Since the fate of museums from their

very beginning is technological, it will be most interesting to see how far we can get in restoring museum objects to life.

A Mexican writer, Carlos Fuentes, was asked in an interview what problem he thinks would be central to Latin America. He did not answer that it was democracy, economic difficulties or political dependency. He clearly stated that the problem is "to create the national identity", claiming that there were too many imitations in their history, too many of those imposed from outside. It is not a mere coincidence that by the same source of inspiration one of the best, though old, museums in the world has been created - the Anthropological Museum in Ciudad de Mexico - as a magnificent, prestigious, metaphor of national Mexican identity. So, what do we finally have? As always, a number of questions to be answered, or at least to be posed.

Museology can be defined only if confronted with its basic vocabulary and then checked, adjusted, reformed in the time of change. If we succeed to do so in satisfactory way, we shall have to admit that museums, especially if we take them in their traditional sense, are not the only institutions within the field of heritage: the necessary definition of museums might still cover traditional museums but must allow the incorporation of all the diversity of agents whose field of work is the transfer of the human experience of nature and culture.

If we accept that the field of museums is identity and if we are analyzing its approach to that, we shall be actually trying to define the contemporary museum; the definition will certainly be more tuned to Rüsselsheim, Le Creusot and Haute Beauce to take but a few different examples than to the Louvre. The theory would define the philosophical paradigms, should fix the aims and clarify the motives. Due also to the lack of that theoretical basis, to the lack of philosophical essence of our work, we have highly bureaucratic and monetarized museums; the only side of them partly opened to advancement is technological: they are singing the same old tune but in much clearer, high-tech voice. So – to say what the role of museology is will mean deciding what museology is.

What can museums do about the endangered Planet of Earth (the Spaceship Earth, as Buckminster Fuller would put it): it is being transformed drastically and dramatically in front of our eyes. The crucial question arises whether the lost harmony between man and nature can ever be gained back. Identity is "vis vitalis" of things and humans, that is what made the entire environment and brought us here through time: are we committing suicide by the mere disregard for its vital importance? Besides being a part of a search for the survival model, the protection of identity has become very much a fundamental ethical issue. As constant reflection upon the objectives of the profession, Museology must give answers.

The growing interest in museums, a boom indeed, is not the success of our policy as much as it is the effect of the global identity crisis for which a counterproductive means is searched. If you seek a good provocation to motivate your contribution, just remember that most of the world is suffering a despair of acculturation: Africa, Asia, South America... There are numerous nations and religions, even in Europe, subdued by other, bigger nations and their culture. Neocolonialism starts by conquering the soul, by subjugating the local culture and then progressing towards economic and political issues. Just remember China, India, the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan... We were only counting the dead but what about identity loss, what about people without a past, deprived of their collective memory: can we do more for refugees than just saving physical lives? What should museology say and museums do about the elimination of Indians? Still speaking about identity, let us contemplate the horror of the drama of the world of nature. Nature cannot fight

back, it can only be spoiled and ruined, it can become a hostile, unhealthy environment and that is exactly what is happening. Can we tolerate that some ten thousand species are irreversibly disappearing each year from our planet? Can we accept that nature is being pushed into reservations? Should we tolerate that bioengineering interferes with the natural order (if it exists any more)? Does our professional and ethical concern end up in the proud possession of the last specimen of the exterminated species? Are museums here to document passively the disastrous trends, or to do something about them? Museology is dealing very much with the future of our past, the future of our identity, that is, our future.

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### 3. THE PROLOGUE TO A CYBERNETIC MUSEUM

Some of you will remember that there was the time when the idea of development was practically indisputable. Development was advancement and fight it or suspect it was acting against progress. The two were synonymous, anyhow. After the rebellious sixties, revealing seventies and active eighties the myth of progress is dead: the profit makers are desperately looking for suitable disguises whereas the post-humanists are seeking for supports and strategies to fight them. While the conflict of greens vs. pollutants became a notorious part of our daily routine, we also witnessed a shift of emphasis towards the culture and quality of life in general. Namely, there's a development in culture too. Being a part of a rapidly changing world, it also changes. Since this rate and rhythm of change became dramatic, our interest in the quality of change is more than justified. The very idea of "sustainable cultural development" implies therefore rightfully, that there might exist also an "unsustainable" development. And, that distinction is exactly what we ought to talk about. But culture is a general, positive category, like love, for instance. And yet, there's nothing we could imagine as "too much love". "Unsustainable" love would therefore be some perverted fixation that ends in the loss of freedom. Consequently, unsustainable cultural development is a degradation of culture, its negative projection. Any culture is an opened, vulnerable structure that reacts very sensitively to the changes of environment. I do agree with the thesis that counts the perils (F.Schouten, 1991): over-population, uncontrolled introduction of modern technology, urbanization, booming of tourism, rapid changes in infrastructure. And there are obviously more to add. Yet, these are merely first cohorts of the two armies of cruel invaders: acculturation and internationalization of cultures. The first is a sort of generic substitution; the stronger or more aggressive culture takes the place of the one it has defeated. The second is an entropical monster, a sort of black hole for cultures, more a process of constant degradation than a cultural entity in itself. Acculturation is obviously more of a problem for the so called undeveloped part of the world, that is to say, a cultural disease of the poor.

It requires little creatures of the south seas thousands and thousands of years to build a magnificent coral reef, a living environment for thousands of other creatures. Yet only a few buckets of some liquid used or wasted within our development machine are enough to make it a dead underwater desert. And what is the difference between this coral reef and some local culture, say in Asia, built and cherished for some six thousands years? Their quick end due to insertion of devastating foreign cultural substance makes the parallel even more obvious.

Internationalization of cultures is a disease of rich, but of the poor too, as the latter always get their fair share of any evil. As the world is being enveloped into the media sphere, we are still enchanted by the possibility of simultaneous happening. The logic of power and profit forces us into networking which is formalization of new spiritual dependencies. The East has been defeated first of all on the level of media, creating an illusion of superiority of western culture, western technology and western way of life. The chance of critical insight was lost by this intrusiveness and local denial of freedom of choice. Newly opened, former communist countries in Europe will expose their disorientated citizens to the long experience of being second-rate westerners. The East of Europe like the Western world, will then turn faster and faster within the whirl of the international culture. It is an instant, mass product of media, under the pressure of the predominant forces of society, - of power holders if you prefer it simple. Each time you sit in front of your TV set or open the newspapers you are being stuffed with "Natreen" sweetened directives what to eat, what to wear, what to think: a culture created in laboratory to be worn throughout the next season. Maybe this is somehow ment to be that way in the global village of ours. But if we have to loose, let's die giving at least some resistance if we cannot be heroes. One should believe that museums could play a

role.

Knowing the enemy is obviously a starting point of any resistance. But, we have to match his actions by some counteractions. What is the enemy's strategy? I believe that the most important part of it is the obstruction of the natural transfer of cultural experience. Culture is, indeed, a coral reef: it is a permanent effort of continuation and change - a change within the continuation, a process prevalingly guided by a set of vital forces that form the core of its identity. If out of any reason the genetic message is not passed over to the next generation to sediment, we witness the process of degradation or death.

The imposed speed of changes in our technological environment is such that leaves us no time to adapt and to live like productive cultural beings. We are turning into technological beings, more and more dependent upon our technological environment. Technology is quantitative and expansive and we are simply not given a chance to reflect upon it: that is absolutely an unsustainable development. That is the first strategic subsystem. The second, and there may be many more, is the media content that functions as noise in any natural transfer. Its efficiency ends up in substituting the inner vibrations, it blocks spontaneous collective creativity, it obstructs the fine sedimentation of collective memory and transforms us into cultural zombies. Technology is hardly used to follow the logic of individual culture so that culture could adjust it to its own syntax.

Now, how do we fight back? By activating our "counter-irritant" system. Among many mechanisms invented as extensions of our natural abilities, I like to think that museums are important enough. The claim would be that they can do something about cultural development, making it, say, sustainable. But before I try to explain this mechanism, let me burden it with still another responsibility, to make the discourse complete. We have talked so far about the need to moderate the development of culture, by a set of protective actions, but the right approach would be that we also "attack" the very forces which produce the "aggression". Attacking would obviously mean an ambition of influencing the development forces of society in a corrective manner. The dichotomy of development always consisted of forces of change and the forces of adaptation. In the primitive society these parts of actual dichotomy (of dualism, maybe) were a compact unity. There was no dissonance between the mechanisms of civilization and those of culture as they formed a whole. The material culture was firmly entangled with spiritual. Pragmatic objectives were vitally linked with the collective experience that the defects of the latter meant serious drawbacks or disaster. Well, nothing much changed in this gambling with the Destiny: the survival game is the same, only the stakes are breath-taking.

The obvious problem in the contemporary society is that this natural unity of change and adaptation does not exist. Therefore homo faber is gaining an advantage over homo ludens: the two hemispheres of our brain are not in harmony. The Newtonian machine is grinding us all: machine induced logic responds to any need by designing new machines. We live the apotheosis of the cartesian, rationalist era - a dangerous time in which even museum people (though only exceptional personalities, like D.S. Ripley) mention survival and salvation as our ultimate goals. But I do not think this culture of ours has ever understood the logic of this machine: the Newton's third rule says that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In the man-regulated world things may not be that regulated and it happens somehow that the actions taking place within the sphere of material culture - a sphere where our technical genius is governing - are not matched at all from the other side; it does happen that by having more we happen to have less and by being more free we are more enslaved. The cartesian devil is buying off our souls: an illusion a piece. We are already seduced deep into a bewitched forest. Can somebody, our museums for instance, show us the way to the sunshine? Or, if unable to do so, do they make just another torturing illusion within this wicked plot? Most of them participate involuntarily and unconsciously within the processes

of the conquerous western civilization and its cartesian ideals. Museums are misused. More and more, addicted to the same set of quantative objectives, they represent a medium of high energy flow. Contrary to what a highly informatized society would need, they themselves turn the past into a quantative perfection. Unusable, as they become in this way, they are often forced to chose: either they protect themselves by a scientific aura, or they cede to popular needs on commercial basis. Both ways they betray ( and now, the "magic" word comes) their *mission*. Only the "third wave museums" (Šola, 1985) - still a minority among museums - can successfully enter the post-humanist syntagm in which they perform a role of a counteractive mechanism. By acting this way they can reach usable messages about the reigning Uncertainty - not by denying it but making it an acceptable human fate. By profound understanding they can provide.

Museums have to be formulated on the logic of dialectics and cybernetics; both of them explain the evolution of things in the terms of tension between two poles. "In dialectics the tension between the theses and antitheses creates synthesis; in cybernetics the tension between the threat and counteractivity produces stable balance capable of maintaining the norm" (van Dajn, 1982). Without exaggerating we could however claim that museums might be effective in this broadest sense of necessary homeostasis that would, if not prevent, then slow down the processes of entrophy. By beating the entrophy there where it is created we might also be able to get better results in our effort to continuete the cultural codes. As one among the mechanisms of self defence, museums solve nothing, but can contribute to a possible solution considerably. This idea of counteractive reaction is much older than cybernetics - we can trace it in our cultural circle back to Hypocrates. He used the term ponos to describe the defence effort of a body in an illness. When McLuhan is talking about "equilibrium as a strategy of governing force of any body" I understand it as fundamentally cybernetic approach. In this sense the governing force of the society (if the society intends to live and prosper) should be culture - spiritual culture. One could be well aware that this is not the case at least from the Renaissance onwards, but we have good reasons for alarm when seeing that the civilizational forces (be it profit or "just" the prevalence of "to possess" over "to be") took over the entire control of our spaceship Earth.

The main idea behind existence of museum is continuation. There is always an identity, different in its complexity from one institution to another, which somebody wants to continue. One of the ways to do it, as we have conceived was through a museum institution which seems to envelope a well defined process of collecting, research, care and presentation. That's museography. The moment we start to ask further questions as: why, how, for whom, with what aims, etc., we might be dealing with upper level of museography which, if high enough, may earn itself a disputable name of museology.

Much within museums is mere Vanity Fair. If certain Mr. X wants to earn himself eternity by bequesting his collection (for which somebody has yet to build a museum; sic!) this could quite easily fall out of the range of our interest. There the museum institution is circumstantial and likely to be misused. There may be no other logic in the existence of the particular collection (or eventually a museum) beyond the personal interestes of the collector. The community may recognize collection's potential as relevant to its own history and development, but not necessarily so. Such museums have little choice in their existence: they can either be attractions through the material value or fame, or they can turn into institutions for scientific research. Describing the prevalently scientific institution by naming it a museum is misleading as the name would be appriate only if the institution is public, user concerned. On the contrary, those museums which from the very beginning had an ambition to document and be used for the sake of continuation of certain productive memories, certain know-how, some ideas that illustrate the logic of the present vital forces of the society or a given community etc. - those museums are our rightful concern. They seem to

be following this inner logic of museum idea, which we, eventually, may call cybernetic in its communicational, corrective quality.

Our museums should enable us to understand the world and our place in it: "The simple message of cybernetics is: Understand yourself! Look at what you are doing!" (van Dajn, 1982). And that, without adding much, seems to be a sound basis for museum mission. We, as individuals and collectivity, we have to be well aware of what we are and what we are doing. Museums, as they are now, do not help us: they prefer either scientific aloofness or nostalgic passivism as both approaches are well tolerated by the power holders (of which museums are dependent in many ways) and by the educationally conditioned public. Behaving like this in a living environment they avoid their responsibility. Revealing the true nature of our problems, of the nature of this civilizational and cultural paradigm, of the true needs and true troubles, would mean denouncing the causes; that would lead to critics which means putting oneself at risk. When one indicates the problem and sees the cause, it makes poor cowardice to ignore it. Closing oneself in the ivory tower of science is therefore likely to be an intentional escapism. One should not claim that museums should behave like Greenpeace activists (although, personally, I have a lot of admiration for their direct action), but turning the head away from harsh reality is irresponsible, unfair towards the tax-payers: it's lacking human dimension and can hardly support the "raison d'être" of a public institution. Museums, as democratic institutions (and it has to be true for the most part of them) have to offer this precious opportunity of self-analysis, of insight into the totality of processes in the community (and outside of it) that are relevant for its functioning; they have to serve as information source, as reflection premises, as forum where democratic decision making is given its information substance, where argument is obtained enabling the users to form correct dilemma.

By understanding the actual world around them, museums can make the proper use of their potentials and by applying the stored collective experience to adequate situations around them they achieve the quality of participation. In this way they start to share the same destiny with their respective community. If they are to perform their true role, they cannot be governed by the forces of profit, as it is exactly those forces that create perils the museums should neutralize. It seems that museums are not aware of this universal manipulation they are exposed to. Like in any other institutional sector, this lack may cause a profound crisis. Although museums grow at an unprecedented rate everywhere, it does seem possible to talk about that crisis already.

Counteractivity becomes possible only if we know the situation, i.e. the size and range of aggression. So, obviously, two things are important: knowing the world and knowing the medium. First thing is attainable when we realize that our present is the only logical point of departure and the sole point of return whether we want to explore our past or foresee our future. Both of these questions are very much a theory of the profession. Whether museums like it or not, the past is always changing, it is being constantly re-thought and re-evaluated. This is a spontaneous process, done by natural urge resulting from specific circumstances of the present. We usually invent the past that suits the best the value patterns of the present. Since this is to a certain point inevitable, the problem is that this should be done as a rationalized, controlled process and therefore highly effective for the ethically correct purposes.

Museum is medium. Knowing the medium is the first prerequisite of any correct action and use of the full capacity of it. Yet, only a well defined profession could be capable of such knowledge. Many people working in museums have perfect knowledge of the museum institution and its working process. Yet, they are unable to use it beyond its inherent administrative logic, they do not perceive it as a tool, as a means, as medium to achieve effects outside of the immediate institutional logic. The ability to understand the medium is

preceded, or indeed it stems from it, by the profound understanding of the museum idea, not only museum institution. They should be there as public service, to assist and help towards awareness and understanding, towards the better quality of living. Yet, they can hardly move any further from a mere distribution of knowledge.

The same way as a museum profession should be able to use the past in the most appropriate way, it should be able to adjust and change the very museum institution to the changing reality around it. The level of frustration has risen so high by this inability, inaptitude of profession, that we have to make an urgent effort in this sense. But, like in many other a profession, when this call for change becomes obvious to all and everybody it then might be quite late for it. One adjustment is however done promptly: the change of technology. Buildings become more luxurious, illumination is changed, new apparatuses are introduced... The way of thinking, the only decisive thing among all, stays the same. Therefore, the task of theory (I do not say museology as it is supposed to serve only a limited range of heritage care institutions) - the task is therefore, at least doubled in its nature.

Generally speaking it would be, again, cybernetic in its ambition to change and balance the existing tensions. On one side one should see it as an eclectic, critical discipline, able to filter and synthesize statements about the needs and frustrations of this world of ours - so that they can serve as a basis for heritage concerned institutional policies. It is a sort of an autonomous apparatus for self-guiding of the profession and for whatever it stands for. If wishing to play an important role in the society, to acquire importance pertaining to a mechanism of collective experience, museums and similar institutions must have this sort of ability to maintain an evolutive critical definition of the world. They have to aware of what past is and what should be a desirable future of the society so as to be able to add themselves to the collective effort of continuation. On the other side, its task is obviously the profession itself. Again, processual in its character - with a cybernetic action as a final objective - it has to provide an opened, changing definition of the profession, able to anticipate and receive the current and future developments. It has to be a theory that functions as a critic of institution, and the critic of profession itself.

Many theorists demonstrated embarrassment but only a few have expressed their impatience with museology being "in status nascendi" for more than a century. The problem was in the fact that it had tried to grow out of the museum institution: it was (and still is, in fact) institution centred and one can hardly think about any scientific discipline of the sort. There was one thing more: the science of Museology as proposed was referring only to the traditional museum institutions. Part of the kindred institutions (like zoos, natural parks or science centers) were admitted to ICOM (due to the logical response to changed circumstances) but would not fit official scientific schemes. We needed a central concept amidst this institutional configuration and I have proposed that we name it "total heritage". Their common philosophy upon their common theoretical denominator was therefore named "heritology". (Šola, 1982) The comments were extremely discouraging but practice, which is the best friend of any right prediction, invented a whole range of hybrid institutional forms whose existence can be rationalized only in a wide opened concept as the one proposed.

Heritology did suggest the centrally positioned "sun" that sheds the light of its logic across the planetary system of heritage care institutions, yet it only made possible a further experiment towards a terminological convention. Maybe a term that would suggest the nature of that theory itself, a way to hint its essential content. This is how Mnemosophy was born (Šola, 1989). It should be explained as cybernetics of heritage. It is an information science. There are some slight chances within the present convergence of heritage based professions that Mnemosophy once becomes some "general theory of heritage", a sort of theoretical common denominator to, at least, five information sciences: librarianship, archivistics, museology, encyclopaedistics and documentalistics. How long and how far the protagonists of

different specialist disciplines will resist the logic at least by trying to obtain to their proper sciences an indisputable scientific aura, one could not tell as many things in this world happen contrary to "sensus communis" anyhow. It is a science about future of the collective experience - about the future of the past. "A philosopher is one that loves the vision of truth, of wisdom", says Bertrand Russell. Nothing can fit better an ambitious science and nothing can apply so well to museums and institutions where entire human experience is stored so that the truth can be preserved and that it serves as a source of good advice for the life in present. *Historia est magistra vitae!* Can museums give back some dignity to this abused lady? Cybernetics is there to colour this theory suggesting its preconceived efficacy and purposefulness. It is by itself a science about the laws of the information flow, and that is exactly what museums are doing: they make and process the information. Cybernetics can also be a general theory of systems and general theory of regulation. Moreover, it is a theory of guidance of processes and communication. Be it inner museum working process with the eternal antagonism of scientific and communicational concepts, or the role of museum in the community - this cybernetic homeostasis is just what we might feel as our fulfilment. If philosophy is only a segment, a cybernetic philosophy (an intentional pleonasm) is there to suggest a vector instead: a difference that, I believe, exists between a statement and a message. It took museums about two hundred years to demonstrate this difference. As there is no "churchology" or "schoolology" but theology and pedagogy, this science is centred upon the concept of heritage, as to total collective experience, all inclusive, spacial and temporal. It includes the entire environment (defined in its utter complexity as it was proposed a quarter of a century ago by McLuhan).

As for the uneasiness that one feels in front of curious product that bears neither certificate of the scientific community nor of the glorified practitioners, one should remember that staying with definitions upon the level of memory, collective memory, as substance of museum activity is just another proof of its exclusively quantitative character. Museums grow in number and in size like inflatory currency: the quantity never corresponds with value. Thus the blooming museum world, a true institutional explosion is, paradoxically, a solid proof of profound crisis. The endangered, diseased civilization fighting for the survival of the richness of its diversity, is producing institutional antibodies that are, at the moment of creation, infected by the same symptoms. Most of them, at least judging by the new museums created. They are turned into placebo pills due to the inaptitude of the profession which is not able to see the mission it has to perform. This theory should help us in creating an important profession. The beautiful informatics that should help us to understand ourselves better and extend our reach, is turned into the disguise of the profession unwilling to face its change and, as consequence, turning itself into a deep crisis. Understood properly, information technology can only show us what we lack: if the mission is not reformed we shall be able to create perfect and total but useless memory, as we shall be afraid to accept that our medium is essentially creative. The selection of data during the process of abstraction and analogy is a great responsibility which ends up in information and messages used in the purposeful communication process. If our memory is filtered through such a process, the result is necessarily a wisdom. The memory (greek: *mneme*) is thus further determined by the quality of wisdom (greek: *sophia*). Thus, the information about the past becomes a message from the past - a usable wisdom.

The museum institution deriving from such a theoretical approach one should rather not call a museum in order to widen the concept and allow the distinction towards the cybernetic counteractive version of it: a heritage action unit. A true reformist, unlike the false one (that of technological disguises) has a profound respect for the tradition and exclaims with conviction: leave the good old museums as they are, but, for God's sake, make the new ones new!

What can this "new Museology" do for the community? It can create usable museums and the profession with the well defined mission of serving for the community's welfare. Putting the dead body of a culture in a glass coffin and proclaiming it a care is, most probably, a cynical act. This suicidal civilization of ours is replacing the dying hearts of cultures by the glossy, marble institutions. A magnificent "pompe funèbres". But, is it not true, that if you want the heart to beat vividly again and the body of culture develop sustainably, you will attach to it an efficient, fine machine - a pace-maker. But, that's Hypocrates' ponos, a defensive effort, resistance - life principle, a hint about the cybernetic museum.

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## II MUSEUM INSTITUTION

1. An introduction to critique of museums
2. Old vs. new
3. Museums and development
4. The role of museums in developing countries
5. Science and technology museums
6. Regional museums in multi-ethnic society

## 1. AN INTRODUCTION TO CRITIQUE OF MUSEUM

If there would be the argument for the reform of theory of museums, - one should see it in the lack of self criticism. The theory should project as much as it should evaluate. Itself, first: *Ab ipso Lare incipe*. If a reformed museum is there to help people live better by understanding the world around them it will necessarily mean evaluation of the reality, past and present. To obtain this right of criticism, one would be obliged to impose the process on oneself. The lack of constant evaluation may lead to the inability to adjust and change, a deficiency that, as it seems, shatters the very future of traditional museum. Criticism is bad if it ends in cynicism and it is good if it becomes a programme for a reform and affirmation of hope. Quite often one would hear that we provide what our public requires. But public is a specific group of pre-conditioned followers on one hand, and unable to understand the nature and the capacity of our profession, on the other. One can however develop the knowledge, experience and understanding of the needs of our public as well as those who pass by our open entrance doors without an urge to come in. These presumptions and the understanding of the nature of our mission should lead to projections which indicate the frustrating difference between what is offered and what should be offered.

If our users need a museum of sound, we offer them a museum of musical instruments where an amazing quantity of original musical instruments silently witness the history of instrument design.

If there is a need for a museum that would cultivate the taste for esthetic expression, we give a palace of whitewashed walls with material substance of art coded in the artefacts.

When people need the understanding of the Mother nature, we offer them either dead animals or those imprisoned in the concentration camps of zoos.

For explaining the origins of our civilization and culture we usually offer a three-dimensional handbook for students of archaeology and ethnology.

If there is a need to make people understand their local history and acquire the sense of identity, museum profession presents them with the history of rich and noble.

Urgent, incessant need to understand the technology, its logic and capacity, becomes thus, in our museums, a review of its triumphs over humans and nature.

As for its own needs to have a philosophical basis of the professional mission, the profession prescribes itself a constant cure in increasing quantity of technical skills and new technologies.

Thus, when we all need more wisdom, inside and outside of our museums, we are all given still more knowledge.

Museums are still dwelling upon false myths of omnipotent science, of superiority of man upon nature, of finiteness of knowledge, of a rationalist dream that gave rise to the myth of progress. With the appearance of *sustainability* as approach in many areas of human endeavour, it may seem that the myth is finally abandoned. Yet, it will not be finished soon as it generates the right of the present world to continue as it goes, run by the present motives and powers. Museums are their legitimate expression. The progress has been assigned the

moral quality of advancement and was a secure shield to the brave, combative efforts of the power generating structures of the society. Indeed, it should have always meant a rising quality of living be it avoiding war conflicts or keeping the air clean and waters clear. Once it is rather obvious that progress has become synonymous with poisonous mud that our world may be turning into, museums have to assure at least their public if not their tax payers that they are on their, positive side. The problem is not a simple one: "faith in progress is usually implicit in desires to improve the past" (Lowenthal, 1990).

The few centuries of humanism were a fascination of mankind by its superiority to the nature. Once aware of the entropic effects, we see most dramatically that we are only, yet the most dangerous part, of the natural balance. Our ever increasing knowledge was however used only to destroy that *homeostasis*. In the new syntagm of *post-humanism* its arguments may now contribute to redefinition of the place of human kind in the Universe.

The past is invention of Renaissance; before that time it has been lived and lived with. Museums could have not existed before past and once the past, or the need for it was there, it was the question of time to see the need taking up an institutional form. What was then discovered as reaction to Middle Ages and inspiration for humanist revolution, became a tantalizing nightmare. "Neither the dreams nor the nightmares of revisiting the past are less intense for their seeming unlikelihood. Moreover, they offer clues to what it is of the past we truly need and can accept or should avoid or reject (Lowenthal, 1990. p.34) The civilization that ventures into a such a great toil to preserve the past is having a creative crisis and identity problem. That explains why museums were founded in the eighteenth century. As crisis is indeed there, museums and other institutions from the field of heritage should provide the useful effects of preservation of that past that help survival. Yet, what they produce is ever more past. We still live in the quantitative age when museums also reflect the prevailing rule in which more always means the better: more museums, bigger collections, both ever increasing will reach the limits of physical growth and force the profession or the museum owners to pose the fundamental questions upon the true nature of the institution.

Instead of helping people to overcome the problems of today and prepare for usable future, museums remained public exhibition of repositories of past, a place where one is not confronted with possible images of truth but with deceiving visions derived from a distant past that avoid any resemblance to actual problems. Yet, interests are recognizable as the past is always anew tailored to suit them. Those interests are pertaining to a group or a class, the true owners of museum medium, and museum is used to transform them into public values. Museum offers usually a solemn presentation of our ancestors; being a temple to the past virtues it fond of its educational impact as it likes to demonstrate that all of the kind that come will enjoy the same glory. In its representational choice of what to collect, the storages of museums are like treasures for a victorious, triumphal procession of the modern civilization.

As modern museum proves unable to transcend its own institution, it is equally unable to transcend the past itself and face its final purpose. Trying to act like a scientific institute, most of museum job is analysis of the past without daring synthesis usable in comparisons with the present. This is why museum is essentially artificial and ex-temporal. When you see in a museum anything resembling true life, you must be facing a window, not a glass case. Unlike any other institution, museums have to brake the barriers between the "exact" and "social" sciences, as only in this way the reality could be given back the quality of entity.

Living through its confucianist phase of institutional development, modern museum likes the rules. order, classifications, formal atmosphere and science as a guarantee of all that. It likes more any new technology than philosophical or poetical discourse that dwell too much upon imagination and instinct. Regarding itself a scientific institution, traditional museum likes to rely exclusively upon "objective" methods of experiment, description, observation and verification. It likes more to create knowledge as a scientific category than conscience which

may imply knowledge but bears ethical obligations. Memory is a complex for an easy manipulation and it is true that any possible danger may easily be avoided by relying upon "objective" and conflict-free scientific approach. The same way, museums rarely talk about hazard and contingency in whatever their subject may be. In that respect they rely upon conservative science.

In its nature, modern modern museum is also part of that big eye of our alter-ego by which we observe ourselves incessantly, depriving our action of true participation in anything. We all live like in a film and act like being in one. Unlike our predecessors, we are not truly in charge of our experiences. Instead of being a place where some of this substantial relationship is re-created so as to be used outside museum, a modern i.e. traditional museum remains one of the institutions where life is "played" for us. Contemporary people associate little, their life is flooded by substitutes for any real experience. They do not associate with art and artists, let alone produce art, but go to art galleries to "enjoy" it. They do not play instruments and sing together but go to the concert halls. They do not cherish human relationships and emotional connections but read books and go to the movies to see how others do it. The life, as true experience, becomes something for others, and, as museums suggest, for those passed long ago. As we seem to be turning into the virtual world of shadows, museums offer us one virtuality more, - that of the past.

Besides those general reasons, the true cause of this detachment is scientific obsession of museums which keeps any creative, imaginative and artistic development of museums at a safe distance. Without proper theory museums will remain unable to find the necessary balance between science, at one extreme, and entertainment on the other. As basically communicational institution its basis may be science but its discourse and art are that of theatre or film.

The caricature of an absent-minded professor lost in the scholastic questions of his specialist science fits too well to the image of a traditional curator. This public imagery, unaware of the pitfalls of professions, depicts well the self-exclusion of certain professions from the perils and risks of sharing the destiny with one's natural users. Helping to revive the dead past we fail to see the living things, people or their values, - in the need of survival. Museums are for people, - to enable and support the quality of their living. What cannot pass this major criterium in museum theory and practice, cannot be but criticized with a hope of change towards the better. It is therefore necessary to propose arguments and scales for constant evaluation, so that final result becomes a double gain: the survival of the profession and the efficiency of its service to the users.

Museums are there for the identity and because of it. The moment they become models be it in their architecture or in their working process, they deceive their inherent nature. Any identity to which a museum can be a protective mechanism requires a specific form of preservation and continuation. This sin becomes most obvious when museums are established in the world outside the European, western cultural circle. There museums formed upon the European model perform a role which may easily be contrary to the local culture to which a museum institution can be a foreign, imposed body. Upon which basic assumption are our museums founded? That man is good or evil? Does this question matter to them at all? If it doesn't as it may rightfully seem the case, the intention to have them serve the society is rather questionable, as well as their communicational ambition. Without ethical commitment, museums may well exist upon people but not for them. One famous director of an equally famous art museum said publicly only twelve years ago: "As for the visitors, we don't mind their coming to our exhibitions". Much has fortunately changed since then, but sometimes only in avoiding public statements of the kind.

The critique's aim must be honest, so that, even if true and painful, it isn't malicious and destructive. Its aim cannot be but providing a comprehensive inventory of weak points

that the profession has to be aware of in order to revise its theory and practices. Purified this way, it could be able to face the imperfections and compete for its own place in configuration of institutions. Any professional attached to the museum cause will know or feel that we cannot give up if we wish, that once conceived more or less clearly our mission is not our voluntary determination. We have to try hard to accomplish it and we can only be denounced and slowed down either due to our own deficiency or due to the creation of other mechanisms that do the better job.

The critical points, as partly explained in this introduction, will figure in any serious attempt of critical analysis of museums. The entire list that merits further elaboration may be a rather long one.

## 2. OLD VS. NEW

Many times in the professional literature or communication one hears the syntagm: old and new. We have found in many museological gatherings and discussions that even the basic terms are far from being commonly understood. Either we say the same and mean different or we mean the same and say it differently. It is not my intention to solve the problem that would require more than ambitious project of the existing *Dictionarum Museologicum*: we need a vocabulary, that once in the process of being made, will also demonstrate that we actually talk about whole new, appearing profession.

These opposites are certainly simplified to enable easier understanding. There is no such situation in reality where, in a such clear confrontation these extremes could be found. As no traditional museum institution exist without some elements of advanced practice, there would certainly be no reformed, new institution we could not perceive bits of old practice or philosophy in. This is to say that characteristics from both sides of the following list often coexist in the same professional environment, sometimes in the very same institution. Needless to say, history has taught us that not all that is old is necessarily obsolete as it may have relevance to the complexity of the needs that museums should serve to. Therefore, this simplified concept may have a tautological value so as to make things obvious, - to make clear distinction between opposed concepts. Some elements that are referential to the museum working process or to the theory being formed around ever expanding configuration of heritage preservation and care, do not appear here as they are necessarily the same to the both theoretical extremes that we simply name "old" and "new". The first category stands for traditional, taxonomic, second wave museums. The second category stands for the new, reformed museums, museums of development, museums of time and space, all hybrid forms within the area of heritage care, for the third wave museums.

The world, even the one of museums would be very simple if it could be put in simple pairs of opposites. Then, even those who thought there was no choice possible at all, could be convinced that a choice should, however, be made. But we are offered nothing of this simplicity. This list is, therefore, but a reminder of the possible extremes rarely found so clearly opposed in the living practice. Such a simplification, so beloved by all who prefer accumulating the knowledge to acquiring, appropriating the sensibility (that provokes in its turn the professional intelligence), would still need the entire effort of interpretation to become effective. Would it be possible to see from it that the prevailing idea of this difference is the implication of gradual but constant change in cultural sector, including museums? Would it be possible to deduce that we may talk about the amount of change that may lead to the entirely new quality of this human endeavour? Is it clear that we may now talk about the post-modernism and cybernetics in museum world in a way that does not imply all the risk of visionary hypothesis. The world of traditional museums may well continue to exist and it should indeed in the proportion of museums representing a part of heritage itself. The rest is change and adjustment, necessarily leading to the new quality. It is, like always, paradoxical that those who will suffer the change or carry it out themselves, will never be enough aware of the fact. So, to those who will have to be convinced this list may serve as a brief reminder, however imprecise. To the others, who are agents of change, it will consolidate and support their claims.

PREVAILING CHARACTERISTICS  
AND ORIENTATIONS OF  
TRADITIONAL MUSEUMS

product orientation  
object orientation  
analytical  
specific  
specialized  
passeist  
rational  
scientific  
formal  
solemn  
normative  
finite  
final definitions  
affirmation of order  
preference of positivism

"objects speak for themselves"  
estheticism  
production of knowledge  
disemination of knowledge

informative  
educational

PREVAILING CHARACTERISTICS  
AND ORIENTATIONS OF  
REFORMED MUSEUMS

process orientation  
concept orientation  
synthetical  
contextual  
multidisciplinary, complex  
futurist  
emotional  
popular  
informal  
relaxed  
flexible  
opened  
evolutive, opened definitions  
preferes organization  
expresses and provokes dilemma,  
questions and speculationsees objects as  
interpretive start  
information space design  
mediation of experiance and wisdom  
encouragement of understanding and

creative ability  
communicative  
"cybernetic", corrective

impressive  
prestigeous  
extensive  
possesive, conquerous  
using technology to ameliorate the  
existing methods and procedures  
seeing museum as a closed complex

serving the preponderant forces of the  
society  
presenting research

collecting "eternalia"  
implying the logic of good investment  
and market value  
nourishing the myth of the original object  
presenting the scientific truth

scientific orientation comprizing users  
static  
objectivity through historical distance

"working for the future generations"  
heritage as "invaluable relics"  
conflict-free notion of the past

heritage of the privileged, important,  
wealthy, exceptional  
friendly  
modest  
territorial, communal  
protective  
using technology as transforming the  
museum medium itself  
seeing building as physical centre of the  
action  
seerving the comunity and common  
interests  
takig research as a basis for the  
presentation  
collecting "ephemeralia" and  
"quotidiana"  
excluding the material value judgement

accepting substitutes and support material  
uses scientific argument to present  
visions, questions, doubts, possibilities  
users orientation comprizing science

dynamic  
objectivity through honest risk of real-  
time evaluation  
acting for present users  
heritage as viable, collective memory  
past as history of confronted interests and  
possibilities  
heritage as totality

### 3. MUSEUMS AND DEVELOPMENT

The entire history of the museum as an institution shows that we can speak of it as having existed as a true institution only during the last two centuries. The museum constitutes a comprehensive and legally regulated process based on the dominant characteristics both of the process itself and of the position assigned to it by the community, that is to say, its politics of culture. Since the museum institution is not subject to rapid change there will seldom exist anywhere in the world a legislature which would, either in its spirit or demand of practice, be ahead of the institution that it regulates. In short, it is usually a matter of congruence, which results in a reduced challenge for either side to move forward. In other words, it will transpire that any analysis which is even a little more serious, would deal with that relationship as obvious confirmation either of the thesis that the importance of the museum receives insufficient recognition, or of the claim that museums are not satisfying the specialized and social needs incorporated into the legislation.

But whatever the case may be, apart from some general obligation that would implicitly indicate some effect relevant to the forces of development of a society, the museum is being abandoned to the traditional understanding of a culture as a place that on the whole is too prominent and too rarefied to have a more substantial social role allotted to it, as determined through some definition. In its nascent stage (we shall refer to this stage and subsequent stages as First Wave, Second Wave and Third Wave) the museum as we know it today did not exist, and therefore analysis have some merit only insofar as it constitutes research into a phenomenology that was to lead to the creation of museums. Consequently, no definition could have existed at that time. The raising nationalism that was culminating during the surge of the industrial revolution was cognizant of scientific precision and had a high regard for classification systems. The civilization of Wave II created its museums, modern museums, which still represent a valid museum syntagm and associated definitions. When we are speaking of the West, i.e. civilization of the Wave III, we are speaking of the only remaining constant which that world has: permanent, dramatic change. Due to historical circumstances museum activity is falling behind the majority of other professional institutions because of its inherent nature and through social inertia. Its entry into Wave III of its development, which should also be its own attribute,<sup>1</sup> becomes somewhat decelerated, but the future of museums, a future the beginning of which we are experiencing currently, started some twenty years ago through the inception of the patent of the ecomuseums. This is how museums embarked upon the stage of their own development which again, at least in its early days, was marked by a loss of definition. This is a sign of the critical position of the institution during a period of transformation in which one qualitative form, through all highs and all resistance, becomes a new one. Ranking them high or low, defining what is advanced and what is backward, belongs more to the position taken from totalitarian political systems than to life that is imposed by life.

An innovation wins recognition as a gradual change of relations, rather than by revolutionary leaps which would serve to negate the professional experience of the past. If we take the innovation of ecomuseums as a case in point (although this is by no means the only novelty in museum activity) it becomes obvious that the essence of the proposal is not the radicalism that a new model would impose. Indeed the way of thinking "in models" is contrary to the very concept of a reformed museum. Therefore, the main source of inspiration - at least for new museums - should be the identity upon which the museum is created and which it must serve. The result of the constantly differing requirements for another identity must always be a different museum. At the end - and this is the point of the logic suggested by an ecomuseum to all museum activity - the museum must serve, in the finest sense of the word, the community - not only in its prestige and pride, nor at its embellishment and praise for its achievements or the glory of its great history, but also in its development. Up until recent times definitions of the museum institution made no mention of development. The oft-mentioned Round Table in Santiago de Chile (UNESCO, 1973),<sup>2</sup> where a

new social relevance of museums was referred to for the first time, ended with a proposal for a reformed definition, which again failed to make mention of the components participating in the development. The ICOM 1974 definition, still valid today, defines the museum as a "permanent, non-profit-making institution in the service of society and its development". Why is it important to have this obligation included in the definition itself? It is because the legislature compels and, usually concurrently, manifests the level of professional consciousness in a given professional environment.

The identity is divided into civilizational and cultural values. In the past two centuries humankind has experienced progress as a development of civilization (technology and production relations), as growing material wealth. In recent decades the victorious western civilization - victorious both in the sense of its domination over other regions of the world, and in the sense of dominating nature - definitely had to deny the myths which it had created. It is clear to us now that the syntagm of development, of progress - i.e. advance - is much more a philosophical or cultural category which seeks for its meaning in the universal eurythmic than it is a technological problem. The technical effect has lost the natural regulating mechanism, the duty of which is the contemplation of the need and reason, and then an anticipation of the consequences of the action. It was to take almost one and a half centuries for it to become apparent that the museum institution is not merely a decoration for a brilliant tool of the victorious industrial revolution.

Today, all learned debates which concern themselves with the central problems of the profession emphasize the relevance of development within the museum institution. Outside this even a quasi-philosophical consideration (but not an erroneous one) in which a museum may be recognized as a corrective counteractive, as a cybernetic mechanism fact (along with all similar institutions, of course), there also exists a new understanding of development. Even the most serious theoreticians of the future and analysts of the present are in agreement that we are entering a new social paradigm - the cultural society, i.e. a society in which the dominant feature is culture. We are now at the beginning of a new decade for which UNESCO is, as during some earlier ones, attempting to provide a dominant orientation which on the one hand would recognize the demands of reality, and which on the other would define priorities that the world must give special attention to; in its recognition of global processes UNESCO has named this decade the decade of cultural development. It is curious to observe the manner in which the four major groups of ambitions, even at first glance, relate to the mission of the cultural dimension of development, the recognition and enrichment of cultural identity, a greater participation in cultural life, the advancement of international cultural cooperation. For the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to draw attention to the first point, which emphasizes the need to acknowledge the cultural dimension of development. This will be exceptionally difficult for those countries in which museums and culture as a whole are treated as a form of consumption (despite declarations to the contrary uttered by politicians).

The dominant social forces in a society, the economy (in which the making of profits is a priority) and politics (whose priority is to strengthen the hold on power) will readily accept the importance of the museum where it involves the development of various forms of patriotism. They will also understand, to a degree, the need for the scientific dimension (but will not try too hard to support it), while in the less developed countries the vision of museums as a counteractive, democratic mechanism of insight, education and social self-regulation, will be considered as an illusion all the more acceptable the deeper they are hidden within textbooks. (Both businessmen and politicians are in agreement - or at least they publicly declare themselves to be so - within the necessary transparency of decision making; but when it comes down to important decisions - involving political, strategic, ecological, recessional and other consequences - these are then presented as ready-made.) It is therefore merely Utopian to expect in the near future that museums will become a part of wider professional and social verification. These are the reasons why the community loses several valuable possibilities - from the possibility of motivating and of mobilizing an ever widening circle of interested parties, to the possibility of making useful, long-term decisions, as well as the possibility for the long-term strengthening of a positive image of a centre of power.

Being informed is one of the essential characteristics of a cultured condition. Stated in economic terms, a person prominent in cultural life is usually also a productive worker, one for whom a collective interest is not a question of ideological coercion, but a way of understanding existence. If the dominant political forces have wisely directed their interest towards the real prosperity of a community, they will regard the activities of cultural institutions, and therefore of museums also, as more than welcome. A forward-thinking museum will develop a sound feeling of solidarity within a community which, of course, is indicated by overall historical experience, and acts as a living example of a scientifically-based fact whereby all progress is necessarily dependent upon tolerance. A museum can play a role in the homogenization of individual groups, inasmuch as it can present their history as their negative experiences, which must always provide the reasons for conflicts. It is not oriented towards the teaching of peace and unity through differences as a formula for survival. The history of storing objects in our museums, archives and libraries bears witness to our weakness rather than to the strength of our endurance and advances; it is just the negative capital through which we abandon ourselves to the forces of primeval instincts - and together with a concurrent growth of our technological potentials this tendency is transformed into a promised catechism. On the other hand, the characteristics of an orderly, peaceful social co-existence of different identities and differing interests, to which a museum can effectively contribute, are a development factor *par excellence* within the society.

The traditional concept of a museum (both in museums themselves and in the environment) regards museums as places where the (glorious!) past is studied and where objects testifying to that past are stored (and in part exhibited). The traditional museum has considered it sufficient to restrict itself to documenting that which has gone by. In the following phase it took a considerable time for common sense to prevail and, within the profession, to realize that timely action is necessary in order that the fate of a perpetual reconstruction of reality is avoided. In other words, the contemporary museum has begun a search for a future past in order that the traces of time are as fresh and as eloquent as possible. From that point a logical step led to yet another question, prompted by common sense. If a museum is documenting a certain trade that is disappearing, for instance, is it able to do anything to preserve it in its natural environment, in its real context and, if at all possible, in its function? In such a situation a museum appears as the form of social intervention (and the interest of society was indicated by the profession!) which gives a particular trade a much-needed injection of life that is essential to overcome the critical period until a possible revitalization (if only within some institution of the "industry of heritage"). The mode of reactions of the traditional museums does not, therefore, extend beyond a presentation of alibis for destruction, beyond an attempt to wash the unclear conscience of a community through museum intervention. (Every ethnographic museum is full of such examples.) In short, a museum can - in order to meet the requirements of a community, to preserve the layered quality and the specific features of its identity - conduct an effective action ensuring the survival of threatened skills or, in the case of plastic expression, the preservation of specific artistic style. The formulas for this are many and range from the influence on local ambitions, indicating possibilities for the performance of that activity (or those activities) within the production/presentation section of the museum. This is, you will note, much more than a mere museum shop.

It has become obvious in the last two or three decades when the museum profession is experiencing an upsurge and when museums in general are growing in numbers and size as never before that the museum sector is becoming an interesting area from the point of view of employment. British analyses show that this sector grew by 20 % in the period between 1981 and 1986<sup>3</sup>. Economic analyses indicate that these jobs are relatively economic which, once the selection has been made and the system servicing it has been set, cost is relatively low. At the moment museums and galleries in Britain employ around 19000 people, realize an income of L230m. stg. and make a profit of L141m. stg. Nevertheless, no matter how impressive those figures may be, and they cannot fail to be so in any analysis of the development or economic value of a museum, they still fall short of revealing a whole

range of immeasurable, or barely measurable, parameters of their role. Statistics tell us that in that same Britain, which is fast becoming a country where tradition is one of the more important earners of state revenue, new museums are springing up at a rate of one a week. One particular research, dealing with a very successful museum of the "theme park" type (Beamish, in the north of England), showed that every job created in a museum resulted in the creation of 1,7 jobs outside the museum.<sup>4</sup> This logic, reached through the given data only on measurable relations, is lacking in everything that cannot be measured - such as a reputable or a disreputable name.

What is it that attracts us most efficiently to a particular person? The same thing that attracts us to a particular country or to a particular town - an identity: a combination of diverse features, characteristics and their relations which makes that particular identity different from any other. Therein lies the reason for investments in the highly prestigious cultural projects preceding the planned business expansion in many parts of the world. Where a cultural investment results in a creative intervention through the operationalization of a quality programme, a luscious and fertile oasis blossoms forth; a place avoided even by school excursions, as well as by all those considering investing in the economy, suddenly becomes interesting or even in vogue. Land increases in value, different industries appear, development programmes multiply and professional people - normally so selective in their choice of place for their activity - arrive spontaneously. Museums very often form the backbone of such initial investments, their duty being to raise the general condition, to establish a clear relation to the identity of place. Museums and similar institutions thus appear as a form of catalyst and a "joker" of the intended urban regeneration and environmental enhancement.

In the light of this exposition, is it really necessary to make specific mention of the role a museum is to play in the expanding tourism industry? Neither Italy nor Austria are being invaded by armies of tourists who are interested in taking a tour through their transport systems or their factories. They wish to see something different, something that was founded by and which is pregnant with the creative efforts of men. They come because of the uniqueness of their character, both in terms of their cultures and landscapes. And despite the fact that those same streams of visitors often gain little or nothing of the true content which, for one reason or another, they are unable either to accept or understand (and although they may not visit museums and even if they were to do so they may fail to comprehend anything), they will still carry within them an involuntary or suggested fascination, a feeling of experiencing something different, a sense of dignity of differences and, generally speaking, a respect for the fruits of the creative efforts of humanity. All this, in a prosaic effect, the tourist industry extremely efficiently evaluates as a very tangible income. If we are discussing the development of a particular community and even if our ideas were to differ, the respectable material factor constituting an income earned by tourism dictates that we pay close attention to the true protagonists of that industry. Until now the development of tourism has been regarded as a problem of agency management, as those forms of organization necessary for achieving higher earnings. The circle of parameters has been gradually widened and today we are aware that tourism is threatened only when a visitor loses his motives for coming into our region.

Here we are talking about hidden parameters that are difficult to discover even through detailed surveys, but we are completely familiar with them in action. Museums are the institutional form of intervention into identity, able to create valuable contributions to the total environment in which they operate. Besides conserving, restoring, interpreting and re-enforcing the identity they have been created upon and for, they can serve as extremely subtle and efficient marketing for a particular town, region or even a country. One should not, of course, confuse the new museum practice with the traditional museum of superlatives, since a cultured visitor from abroad - and it is such visitors who will be relied upon in increasing measure - knows how to differentiate between the true state of culture and the props that are constructed to cater for the tourist season. It must be said at this juncture, if only as an aside, that taking everything into consideration the best kind of museum for the tourist industry is that which is best suited to the local population. The essential thing is to recognize it. Investments in the tourist industry must encompass those mechanisms of identity since identity, like all other resources,

is finite in its duration and capacity.

If the school is a mechanism for the transfer of socially-formed knowledge, then the museum is something more than that, at least in its flexibility and accessibility: understood correctly, the museum is a mediator of collective responsibility. No one can deny the vital importance that school has in the life of a social community, but one must realize that a museum is one of those institutions which, as a system complementary to schooling, facilitates the transfer of cultural codes, thus ensuring perpetuation of identity, i.e. the survival of those constants without which any identity would be left to the forces of decline and oblivion. Theoreticians will often prophesy, at least implicitly, that the school will acquire certain features of a museum, while at the same time predicting an important future role for museums, prompted specifically by the need for flexible mediation and dissemination of positive experience. There are few schools and few museums that teach wisdom - i.e. to introduce one to the way of thinking and the sublimation of knowledge into a specific form of newly-acquired intelligence. The pragmatic forces of development are going to feel an increasing need for that very operationalization of experiences past. Museums are going to be numbered among those institutions that will offer a precious contribution to progress, changing its quality into one of advance (if the latter generates a total, humanistic approach which implies a responsible choice and technological changes based on ethical principles).

The true guarantee of development is a brisk economy and a rich culture. In the world where real work is becoming a form of competition that is ever more rare, all we are left with is a state of a perpetual war of informatics - and therein rests the real power - it is in the identity that its general element lies. Here also we are, quite logically it would appear, returning to the major role of all social mechanisms that would ensure the durability of identity, which is more than relevant to an understanding of development.

New museums will be conceived as centres of heritage and local development on an increasing scale. Traditionalists in the museum world will find more reason to be vexed about it than to rejoice in it, but we are speaking of exclusivity which in practice will be slowly eradicated by the new generations of curators (educated specifically for a career in museums) and by life itself. The secret dream of revolutionary reformists and the secret dread of traditionalists, in other words the threat to or degradation of good traditional museum, is more a sign of a failure to adapt in times replete with change and, because of this, to times of a growing importance of the museum institution.

When we speak of the role that a museum plays in development (or as I would prefer to say, in progress), placing the museum on centre stage, the creation of an obligation for showmanship is neither a good nor a reprehensible thing: it is, as always and in everything, a question of balance. But the demand for increasing dynamics of the public media, museums being part of them (and pushing them to secure the additional financial means themselves), places museums in a delicate, not to mention a dangerous, situation. The danger is for both, - their own integrity as well as the integrity of identity they are representing and that could result in a catastrophic downgrading of the profession. If viewed in that light, this constitutes an interesting situation in which it is necessary and possible to prove that the profession is in crisis, despite a veritable explosion in growth. Any growth deals with risks of decadence and degradation and may actually be led by their logic. Needless to say, growth in museums as in the society, is prevalently a quantitative category unless we apply to it qualitative parameters. In this respect much of the obvious growth is dubious and should be reviewed in this optic. It is precisely upon this logic that the concept of sustained development came about. Among the forces of resistance to the dominant elements within a society which define the parameters of development, the *autonomous* museum institution may figure as powerful mechanism. Museum institutions are entering an era that will award them an apparently blessed qualification: "business relevance". One should not believe that this link could or should be, avoided, but in the corporate project of the new era the sector of culture should strive to win 51 % of the conceptual shares. However highly improbable it may appear, this should be the daily task in our mission.

Notes:

1. Šola, Tomislav. 1983. Towards the Contemporary Concept of Museology. *Informatologica Yugoslavica*, Zagreb, No. 15, 1983.
2. UNESCO Round Table on the subject of the role of the Museum in Latin America, 20-21 May 1972, Santiago de Chile.
3. Lord, Barry; Dexter Lord, Gail; Nicks, John. 1989. *The Cost of Collecting - Collection Management in UK Museums*. Report commissioned by the Office of Arts and Libraries.
4. Johnson, Peter; Thomas, Barry. 1990. *Assessing the impact of a Museum on the local economy. Breaking new ground: a conference on current research in museum studies*. 8-11 April 1990, University of Leicester.

Zagreb, April 1991

#### 4. THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The Nehru memorial lecture delivered on December 1988  
at Bharat Kala Bhavan Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

Nehru was a man of vision. Big India was small for the energy of his insight, for the wisdom with which he was able to see beyond and ahead. With him we were all able to see details and variety where before there was only a heap. Like a great intellectual, he lived up to the standard so well explained by André Gide: There is no healthy nation nor the fresh spirit that stays with eyes fixed to the ground - trying to recognize there only graves. He was aware that the modern museum concept i.e. the traditional one was created in Europe (that what he said in conversation with Malraux), but I imagine that he would like the recent development of museums that is entirely based upon denial of any model. The very idea of non-alignment meant alternative and specific where general and uniformed solutions were expected. The movement announced information emancipation, political emancipation, spiritual emancipation - all that meaning the emancipation of *identity*. He was rightly sure that nobody will help underprivileged or just developing if they do not help themselves. It may have been a dream as, anyhow, all the best things are.

Who invented museums? The claims are too eager for professional justification and demonstrate the misunderstanding of the nature of contemporary museum institution. The longer the culture the earlier the idea of heritage protection. I do not say: of museums; the tradition of latter is no longer than two centuries at utmost. India, with its rich culture could put up claims, at the level of some proto-forms of museum as far back as 3000 years ago. Two thousand years ago Rgveda may be regarded as an oral museum, the oldest in the world. I am sure that the connoisseurs of Indian culture could give further arguments through the analysis of Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda...The idea of museum taken in its broadest sense (the only productive one) exists wherever there is an effort to contextualize things and persons within the time and space. It is the evidence of memory and the memory itself. There are no new things but only those that are discovered anew, applied to what has not been foreseeable or combined into new, productive associations.

My intention is to give you some usable reasons for further speculation, sometimes by giving answers to known questions and sometimes by offering new questions. The lecture is like a communion in which a speaker should be able to create a vibration that will set others' spiritual strings to the same movement.

Why is it, really, that only at this point of our civilization  
we need a mediator in our relation to the world?

Why is it that new sciences are needed where always a common  
sense was enough?

Why is it that we carry an obligation more than any other  
previous civilization, the ambition of perfect recall?

Why is it that heritage (in its totality) needs a specific  
action, when it always progressed in time without that added  
mechanism?

Why is it, indeed, that we are the first civilization (or is  
it just the western circle?) to believe that eternity can be  
reached by preserving the physical?

Why is it that still one institutional sector is feeling an  
obligation to teach people how to live?

Why is it that our museums commit the same sin of vanity as  
pharaohs of ancient Egypt?

Or more precisely:

Who needs museums?

Are museum institutions appropriate response to our needs?

What is really the world that brought up museums to their unprecedented boom?

Why is this world trying so desperately to teach people to memorize and to make machines think?

What museums for what world?

Are museums just a result of a bad conscience, an alibi for the inability to control the range and reach of changes?

Why are museums in the herd and not among the herdmens?

Is it not, finally, that our (traditional) museums are forcing the river run up the mountain instead of guiding it around?

The fact is that both concepts, that of museums and of museology are western, or more precisely - European.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore paradoxical that any European/North American related analysis could be quite usable for the rest of the world. Modern civilization is still hesitating between Socrates (for whom the ignorance was the most important cause of evil) and sophists (who claimed that only efficiency and pragmatism count; knowledge is important if it is practical). Latter on, the rationalism supported very much this pragmatic standpoint. Our museums inherited much of that spiritual state - on the very superficial level, though, as they learn too slowly the Socratic art of posing proper questions about the world they are supposed to serve.

And, indeed, what is that world? Any museologist who touches the question risks to be called "catastrophologist", or at least a "preacher" despised by common museum people that "simply do their job". This ostrich syndrom I do not understand as I cannot tell what an ostrich is thinking about when having the head in the sand. I see no way to regard say art museums isolated from technological museums, like I can neither see museums in general as isolated from other areas of heritage protection. Finally, I cannot see heritage itself as defined, and finished past. The rate of changes in any area of human activity or environment is so excessive that even experts are using the word "drama" to denote it. Only century and a half ago only a billion of people inhabited this planet. As things are, in a decade or two that will be the population of India alone. In the last hundred odd years some 500 species of animals were extinct, whereas we know that nowadays about 1000 species of plants disappear every year. If there are four million species on Earth (which is only a rough estimation out of which museum trace only a tiny portion), it is claimed that 20 % of that number is definitely endangered. There are national and international systems who try to control these processes. ISIS in the U.S. is registering natural heritage and besides all data keeps a blood bank. Even McLuhan who was a theoretician of media sensed well that possible analogy: "The museum has become a storehouse of human values, a cultural blood bank."<sup>2</sup> Although he mentions obviously only the museums of culture the logic goes for all of them. Indeed, speaking about extinction - how many cultures (out of how many tens of thousand) are disappearing irreversibly from the civilization of man? The majority of museums does nothing about it. The key words of all the worry and all the future of museums, and not only them, will be identity and survival<sup>3</sup>. Unperceptibly, this vocabulary exists for quite a while in the works of visionary museum directors<sup>4</sup>. "A global survival forum" - one occasion among many appearing, held in Oxford, UK this year - passed without museums or worlds museum organization involved. This absence of museums when crucial questions are taken up is suicidal behaviour. On the other hand, the conception of museums suits some other time and much different circumstances. From processors of past they became its protagonists and continuators. They are, taken as a whole, too bureaucratic to be able to feel the pulse of life and to retain the ability of adjustment to the changing circumstances. If they are already a traditional feature of rich world's cultural scene, when exported as a model in countries that fight for basic means and rights, they prove

to be practically useless.

So called developing world is burdened with numerous problems: poverty, hunger, excessive birth rate, unemployment, lack of education, lack of housing, mismanagement, political dependency, disastrous acculturation, pollution etc. Confronted with the problems at the very existential level, those countries forget and deny their past subduing themselves to the faceless transnational business as its resource and consumer of its goods. Their museums there are symbolic in quantity and quality, made for tourists and local "foreigners". These museums are neither ment nor able to deal with all those problems that countries and their cultures suffer from. Their reach is extremely limited. So, paraphrasing André Gide one could say that past seems to be a luxury belonging only to the class of owners. Very true, indeed, wherever applied, but dramatically true in the poor part of the world.

The ideal version of our future that transcends ideologies and divisions, the society of total information<sup>5</sup> is also bringing some new problems, some of which we clearly see already. Besides, the vision obviously gets further support, further arguments in the terms of hardware, but conceptually, logistically, we are lacking behind - we are, indeed, stunted. Besides the permanent ecological disaster we have its counterpart in the growing war of identities. There is increasing division of the world into the affluent and poor, into privileged and disadvantaged - into head and limbs. A tendency of transforming the developing part of the world into a rubbish tip of technologies, besides of being a curiously shortsighted solution, is only the most obvious entrophy. The new war is not after physical bodies but after souls. It resembles a global communications market, a world's cacophonous information stock exchange. Continuing the comparison, we may ask what is the sound, hard communication currency of the developing world that should be used in this confrontation. Museums? That answers only a part of question, and even that on a methodological level. Museums do contain treasuries, relics, specimens - evidence, and the role of these museum objects can be compared to the golden reserve in state banks. But even the economy abandoned that fashion, the real guarantee of its efficiency and solidity being vivid, creative production and successful marketing. The real guarantee of information potential is sound identity: living culture, effective education, creative environment and systematic heritage care. As it is more important what museums do than what they contain, developing countries obviously need museums that are dynamic, that are able to strike back by keeping the identities vital and productive. Paradoxically, their most strong enemy is within them or in their vicinity: circumstances have installed strong protagonists of international culture and international trends. And yet, museums are just one among the mechanisms that should unite in concerted action. The lack of that unity and synchronization, by the way, is more important problem than isolated, however urgent, problems of individual profession.

It may appear idealistic in this world of ours to insist upon diversities when a whole new logic is being built to make way to all profit. "The west is civilizing the coloured races... (and they) are becoming like us, in bad sense. They are becoming second rate westerners".<sup>6</sup> The majority of educated people in the West do not see it as their problem at all. They would tell: "That's their problem. If they want to buy..." Others are more explicit. But, things are not that simple. Hugues Varine sees distinctively a few propagation agents of "high culture": cultural agents, cultural attachés, detached education officers, cooperation experts, all the Europeans and North Americans travelling to the Third World. This process has got a quality of gradation, of succession where the logic of each import is built upon the existence of the previous one. Or, paraphrasing Bertrand Russell when speaking about pragmatism, "it resembles a warm bath that is heating up so imperceptibly that one is never sure when to scream". Strange things happen to a person whose ideals exist outside of his context, and it may become dangerous if one country's youth start to feel other country(ies) as its spiritual homeland. I hope I remember the words of Nehru, though pronounced in some other time and circumstances: "Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your might". Possibility of being what one is, represents crucial aspect of freedom. But the enemy is not that obvious and when it is, the experience is painful and the result very uncertain.

What does a contemporary man, specially the one from a developing country, need? Optimism,

self-assurance, tolerance, solidarity, certainty, harmony with the environment and - more than anything else - faith and hope. It looks like a task for many, not only museums - and it obviously is. If past is there for some reason it would be to act as a source of wisdom. It is only in this respect that I take an interest museums and this is the only aspect to be deeply studied in developing countries. Specially there. What, indeed, can museums do? It should go without saying that museums in developing countries should be able to care for additional serious matters, when compared to the tasks of the rich world's museums: "There is no human dignity without putting an end to poverty" (Ernst Bloch). Not that one would expect museums to turn into money makers or creators of healthy economy, but they must make a contribution to development and liberation of creative energies. If they make people realize who they are and what is their identity they help building a solid basis of coherent development based upon one's own strength.

The analysis of the modern traditional museum model was done many times and we all try to do it daily in our practice. That model I have called "second wave museums", basically a rationalist approach belonging to the logic of industrial world<sup>7</sup>. Modern European museum is a product of renaissance humanism, enlightenment of the 18th century and democracy of the 19th century<sup>8</sup>. They got technologically advanced but are following the logic and ambitions of previous time. Museums of industrial man still fail in the famous Fromm's differentiation "to possess or to exist". Rather barbarous in their method to attain the eternity, they suit their world. A range of institutions exist exist, maybe undisturbed in their ways (which is not likely though), but museums are ment to respond to specific circumstances and to grow out of very particular identity. They have to be different as basis of their existance changes! One would expect that Indian museums would be less oriented towards *artha* than European. How could the same museums reflect different worlds? Museological analysis could suggest general principles and outline the basic profile of a third wave institution. The implied claim of this approach is that the difference must continue whether the continuation comprizes the existance of a museum or any other action in this respect.

"The study of education and communication by objects and exhibits should be of specific interest in developing countries, where large populations are in the process of making lightning adjustments to technology and the world of science and modernday life".<sup>9</sup> This process is universal but the tide wave of changes that reached developing world has disastrous effects. The planet is building up compensative mechanisms, and museums are one of them. Nowadays they are exploding in unexpected numbers as usual cultural structure is unable to cope with the problem of "ever-increasing rate of change"<sup>10</sup> What change is inevitable and what is the necessary one? In the "global village" and "simultaneous happening" as McLuhan would put it, it is not solely the matter of blocking the destructive transformation but also of assuring vital and creative response. And, what makes difference to traditional museumum conception, we need that response now.

According to St Augustin, the time is triple present. The present we call so with full right is the only one that exists. The past lives as present remembrance, and the future is the present in expectation. All the ambitions of any heritage concerned action should care for the benefit of actual users. The true mission of museums is the development of fundamental respect for the universal good, through the awareness of the total environment. The aim of museums is future, their "method" is past and their area is present. Whatever we may do in reconstruction of some past reality, it will be always evident that all is there (only?) to encourage and actuate the imagination. Founded upon the scientific exactitude and seriousness, museums are the metaphora of its general forces. They are moving through space and time from barbarous treasury to para-artistic communicational tool, from greed and prestige to love and care, from the principle of possession towards the principle of love. Paraphrasing Picasso who said it about art, we may put that museums are a lie that helps us see the truth. Museums and related, kindred institutions, should be wells dug into the identity - wells where we can always find the fresh water of wisdom. The wisdom can be attained only by the selective continuation of the total human experience.

The advancing alternative of ecomuseums in the rich west almost attains the balance in the well

defined configuration of institutionalized culture. There was, however, enough time for museums to become part of cultural values themselves. That is why they usually find these contemplations either repulsive or just another whining business of undeveloped barbarians. Museums in developing countries must ensure that the vital force of tradition continues, as this "living past" becomes a guarantee of spiritual integrity, obtaining always the stability against the blasts of changes. Very much within the logic of ecomuseums, the developing countries need museums as research centres for the identity in accordance with the cultural/territorial pattern - as centres of action, as awareness generators and, finally pulsating scanners of the total environment. In one of his books J.P.Sartre refers to museum by saying: "The experience is still something more than the defence from death; it is the right: the right of elder." This I quote as I find it fitting well into some logic of traditional societies. And if we seek for indigenous reactions to some contemporary needs (like the one of preserving the past from the aggression of present), we may end up in having an action which would not copy but assume council of elders as - again - a source of wisdom necessary for the spiritual survival. Even the West is seeking for some autochthonic responses, re-inventing the museum answer. In that possible diversity of responses we may finally start to learn creatively, one world from the other. Where and how far will the doubled nature of museums develop? In what direction: that of the theatre of facts (scientific experience) and that of the theatre of fictions (artistic experience)? In that heretic quest for new answers (or: for "answers at all" and "answers finally") all may be put to trial. As an European myself, I must admit that I do not fully understand (or even approve) that the works of art should be framed and mercilessly hanged upon the walls. Something like that might have existed in ancient Greece but it is a tradition of some, maybe, four hundred years. In Far East, at least according to Malraux, and some time ago, the gallery of paintings was simply inconceivable. Rightly so, to my opinion, although I doubt many in the Far East would support me nowadays.

In the situations of advancing poverty last barriers to fall are those of social prestige. It is therefore even more understandable why in many developing countries the shining ideal is Louvre or Metropolitan or British Museum. Such mastodontic institutions cost approximately 200 millions US dollars a year. Their secondrate clones are certainly unable to function in restricted conditions, they do not help local crafts, they disregard local trade, they will not rebuild the temple so that tradition may continue, they do not buy new instruments to local musicians... There is a lot of contemplation along these ideas all over the world, and that places museums in a very delicate social role: they are expected to fulfil too many diverse expectations. Some of these views suggest redefinitions towards para-artistic medium: "Museums can help us to recapture a sense of magic and of awe at the complexity and beauty of the natural world and at the genius and skill of men."<sup>11</sup> And, yet, the growing phenomenon of ecomuseums suggests "combative" and "development" types of approaches. This practice and theory accompanying it are the only usable experience for the developing world; the task of action, research and development (as defined by Hugues de Varine) comprises complex and multidisciplinary approach. Developing countries, if acting wisely, could not afford particularization of knowledge in the area of public communication, which is, in case of museums, detrimental to the understanding of causality and contributes to the separation of natural sensibility from life itself. It may easily be that the developing world is more receptive and uninhibited when new museum communication is concerned, and what it gets following the logic of industrial imports, are usually traditional and outmoded products.

A museum in developing country must be a temple of national pride, a research centre upon the identity(-ies) it serves, and a data bank of heritage (three-dimensional and informatic) - it must be a showroom of resources, of trade and production and of development projections, it must act as a leisure centre and, finally, as a stronghold of heritage action (including certainly the environmental aspect).<sup>12</sup>

The crucial condition for the correct or usable development of heritage minded action - or, specially, for any significant transformation of it - is creation of different professionals. The method to do it is the transfer of knowledge and experience. Another name for it may be museology, although a

much wider version would be even more appropriate for the tasks awaiting heritage carers, specially in developing countries. Some new museological approach, which I like to call heritology<sup>13</sup> does bear universal applicability: it goes for all that curators should be creative necessarily and artlike communicators<sup>14</sup>, and that they should transform from mere carers to sharers<sup>15</sup> - these transformations are most urgent matters in developing world. This "religio curatoris", some uniting philosophy of heritage is very much transnational and transcultural, but it is phenomenological in approach and should be of great help to all in the need of effective museum. That reformed science, some new *lokayata* may be called museology, provided that the content is redefined completely. It can only be phenomenon centred (i.e. heritage) which certainly implies much wider concern than the one possible only through museums. The Museology, therefore, is not a science of museums just as clearly as "Moby Dick" is not a manual on whaling. This new theory is, by its character, counteractive, process & life oriented, creative and socially minded. I would define it, firstly, as information science<sup>16</sup>, and then as a cybernetical philosophy of heritage. Consequently - as the concept of museum institution is necessarily more blurred than ever - museum is any creative effort of cybernetical action on the basis of the complex experience of heritage. Good definitions should be like good laws: short and allowing enough space for the practice of freedom and the requirements of life.

In this optic, the international boom of (all sorts) of museums is actually the appearance of the new industry of heritage engineering. Some of the ambitions that won themselves a wide public support do not care about the dignity of a traditional museum concept that they are supposed to follow. And yet the results are there, formed and realized around obviously respectable needs.

In these previous pages I have tried to suggest that problems of developing countries, or generally speaking, their specificity, requires autochthonous response even in the area of museums. Numerous problems, of which I have mentioned but a few, require wise solutions adjusted to their very nature. This fragile world, that the future of Planet depends so much upon, needs self respect and dignity and - development. All that one needs, be it a nation or a person, is too readily offered in this frenzy vanity fair of our world: solutions usually foreign to the original context and too dangerous by the implications. Combative museums, based strongly upon the identity of its users and engaged in development seems to be somewhat ugly creature when compared to its glass and marble, airconditioned, high-spirited contemplation museum, where the rich can afford it. Due to the variety of circumstances the gap between the rich and poor is even widening which creates a need for quite an emergency call. So, let it be allowed to me, specially at this occasion, use again the words of Nehru: "I want work and work and work. I want achievement. I want men who work like crusaders. I want men who are going to fight for what they think is right, and not submit humbly to wrong. I want you to do big things. I want you to build up India." Could this inspire museum people (as they are the most important part of any action), and would it be possible to have museums & heritage recognized as the basis of any development?

Any speculation should have a point of departure in the analysis of practice, but should finally return to it with some responses or proposals. On the other hand, although I have tried to do my best, I am aware that I dispose only with bits of truth. My knowledge of India is far from sufficient, but nevertheless, advocating an active museum I should stand for an active museological thinking. We all need a plan of action, a strategy to follow<sup>17</sup>, and one feels an obliging urge to take a risk of contributing:

From some European examples I do think it would be possible to influence foreign cultural centres to start building their prestigious image by helping indigenous, Indian culture to live and develop further.

Museum or heritage centre with a nation-wide network should be created to serve as a basis of regular and effective action. The project should redefine professional training, should contain maybe an initiative to found a museological institute, should define all actions of some professional common denominator value (International Museum day, museological publications etc.).

There should be an annual exhibition of museum publications serving as a precious occasion to

evaluate it and also to demonstrate to others, outside of museum world, that museums are important publishers. As experience shows in Yugoslavia, the implications or effects are numerous.

There is indispensable need for issuing a special law for defining museums and their role in the society - their functioning, responsibilities, ways of institutional functioning etc., in the compliance with law upon the entire heritage care. It should establish museums as independent institutions under the direction of a special governmental body.

Basic manuals upon the most recent experiences of innovative quality should be published and translated into national languages to facilitate implementation.

Creation of centralized, temporary storages as a part of heritage preservation service, should be initiated.

Creation of some "flying heritage care service", able to react quickly and professionally, upon the spot and applying variety of skills and strategies.

Creation of standardized training units: theory - research - conservation - documentation - communication, should be undertaken.

Elaboration of a project of classification and documentation of museum objects as a preparatory phase for a national information system within the museum area.

Lounging of a major national project of elaborated network of heritage care in India; a similar project concentrated only upon museums together with some study of future of museum service in India.

Issuing a major national document & event, something like all Indian convention on the future of heritage "Indian heritage in the 21st century".

Creation of the "Indian National Traveling Exhibition Service" - an agency that would cover by its high standardized activity those blank areas out of the reach of any regular action. Well conceived, this agency could produce exceptional effects...

There should be a study and then a national project of a network of "total heritage units" or "heritage communication and local development centres"<sup>19</sup>.

A festival of national importance, as a kind of para-museal action: "All India festival of living traditions". It would give the necessary importance to local traditions and would encourage all those protagonists of them that find it difficult to fight back media imports etc.

There should be created a non-political, heritage based, socially, culturally and nationally minded *league* of the young, ambitious intellectuals - a movement "Hearts for India" with prestige and recognition for all who have learned "to step down". The more wisdom we manage to induce into the younger generations, the more prosperous the future of the country will be.

Notes:

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2. McLuhan, Marshall; Fiore, Quentin. 1967. *The Medium is Message, An Inventory of Effects*, p. 137. Bantam Books Inc.
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4. Ripley, Dillon S. 1969. *The Sacred Grove: Essays on Museums*. Simon and Schuster, New York.
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  10. See note 4.
  11. Wittlin, Alma. *The Museum: Its history and its task in Education*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London.
  12. Harrison, Molly. 1959. *Education in Museums. The organization of museums: practical advice*. *Museums and Monuments Series, IX*, p. 92. Unesco, Paris.
  13. Šola, Tomislav. 1987. *Introductory lecture to the international symposium "National documentation centres - corner stones of international network" (chapter: An institution to be)*, Riksställningar, Sept. 1987. Stockholm, Sweden.
  14. The term was first proposed in 1982 (ICOFOM, Paris) and had provocative quality. In some papers that followed, I have tried to give it some further arguments.
  15. Šola, Tomislav. 1987. *Concept et nature de la Museologie*. *Museum*, No. 163, 1987. Paris.
  16. Kavanagh, Gaynor. 1988. *International symposium "What is Museology" in Umeå Universitet 12.-14. April 1988*. Umeå, Sweden.
  17. Maroevic Ivo. 1984. *The subject of Museology within the frame of Information Sciences*. *Informatica Museologica*, No. 1-3, 1984. Zagreb.
  18. The working group upon cultural policy and museums, within the frame of ICOFOM's international symposium "Museology and developing countries", 1988, Varanasi, has accomplished a usable set of conclusions and recommendations that should be further discussed and applied in India.
  19. From the projects of "Synthesis - cultural engineering", Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

## 5. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MUSEUMS

The new theory and communication technologies within the context of the European idea

Meetings of museum professionals are like religious gatherings. Museum people usually exchange their "liturgical" experiences - in short, how to pray and praise their God. But, there is usually no mention of theology and the god himself remains some loose notion; it used to be a museum object, and then reformists proclaimed it to be our public. But parallelly to that, many among us (afraid of excommunication) cherish their fundamentalist conviction in which the only true god is their proper academic discipline. As for the public, it is hoped that this authoritarian crowd will always find the uncomprehensible latin or liturgic slavie a part of their existential masochism. But that, indeed, does not excuse our profession. We are there to know better. Admitting my own heresy I would claim that our true god is the total, collective experience, that our religion is heritology (some cybernetic philosophy of heritage), and our epiphanical message is (simply) wisdom - for the sake of public. Everything else is the question of method, of the liturgy. So, what is our mission? - To make people wiser by broadening their time and space perspectives; to make life better by creating new sensibility of the total environment; to generate responsibility in people by placing them into the universal chain of unavoidable causalities. Taken too educationally, as it was the case in the last hundred years, this complexity is regarded as a mere transfer of the socially formed knowledge, i.e. education. Far too little to be the aim of our mission.

When faith is lost the mass becomes only a liturgy. When the professional philosophy is not there, science in museums turns into bureaucratic institutionalism: the content is lost in form. This lack will generate a permanent disorder in our ranks, be it an important segment of science and technology museums or museums in general. Through the theory which is analytical and speculative layer of our professionalism we shall be able to employ ourselves in the right tasks and proper priorities. Science and technology museums specially have a responsibility to help towards the balance between our civilization and our culture, between pragmatism on one side and the wisdom on the other - between forces of change and the forces of adaptation. Always striving for the (unattainable) harmony "the limping cultural sector" (Harold Rosenberg) has to catch up with technology and keep pace with it - which has been a growing defect of our civilization for the last three to four centuries.

Industrial revolution was the point in our historical time when the Museum Big Bang blasted - it still radiates enormous energy which multiplies museums, further and further through the different spheres of our social space. The sphere where it started from was formed by historic cultures, by the brave, conquerous world of rationalist and Cartesian philosophy. Pushed by the primary impulse, our museums find themselves now in the world of totally different logic. In the "Third wave civilization" (A.Toffler), the one of our time, we live our history as present has disappeared and past became separated from the future only by a fast moving thin red line...Once fatally released, the ugly giant by the name of Change (we used to call it progress, didn't we?) endangeres increasingly every identity, be it nature or culture. So far, science and technology museum people have been analysing the world, whereas the idea of the new role of the museum institution is how to manage the change, how to take command of our "space ship Earth" (B. Fuller) back into the hands of common reason.

The third wave civilization has to have its third wave museums: the history of those started almost two decades ago in Le Creusot. What began as a strive for a social relevance has now become a request for a complex metanoia, rethinking of museums. They obviously make sense only if serving the vital forces of life itself - they start from it and end in it. Once the task becomes obvious enough, all divisions and formalities count for much less; all that really matters is efficacy and high performance. The Social Intelligence, a relatively new field in the Information sciences, is hardly at all concerned with our institutional differencies, and our attachement to the originality of museum

objects is to them a mere romantic myth (rightly so, if I may add). The logic of informatics has arrived. It implies a new synergy of media, it means a new synthesis of knowledge, and it will eventually cause the great convergence of heritage concerned institutions.

Cooperation of museums, and that goes for their entire institutional configuration, had traditionally a symbolic value of professional brotherhood, but now it has to become a quality in its own right. Obviously, an action towards the efficiency but also, one feels tempted to say, towards their institutional survival. Yet almost unexploited reserves of powerful messages, of forgotten wisdom are hidden in the entire sector. They can be activated and revealed through the cumulative institutional functioning. Multidisciplinary, transinstitutional and transsectorial logic of informatics ignores the rationalist taxonomy and the institutional division of competencies. As we are heading towards the realization of Malraux' and McLuhan's visions, as our future takes the first contours of the total museum, we discover our inability to adjust to these developments. The recent application pilot project (within the framework of an European Museum Network), DISCOVERY, will show how unadaptable we are. Those involved came to know museum as a rather clumsy and reluctant partner - quite an ominous sign for our future. Through the mentioned project museums entered symbolically the European programme RACE, but what about others like COMETT, ESPRIT and FAST?

Faced with the swiftness of the process of the informatic society museums should contemplate their "vulnerability": the institutional tradition of some two odd centuries does not suggest a fully and definitely formed profession. Museums are giving a false impression of having accomplished their final stage of development. Two or three hundred new museums a year in the Western Europe may be taken only as a neurotic reaction of the endangered species. Traditional profession is overreacting to the call for change sometimes by changing that which should be a protected value, or by the resistance to the changes where they are necessary. The real sin, however, is when they allow adjust themselves to the new era by appropriating the contemporary technological disguise. Some museums are born old. The expanding circle of institutions concerned with heritage protection suggests some wider and higher level of resonances, a get-together that is only vaguely perceived but desperately needed.

The new cooperation of museums that will be encouraged through the advanced technologies brings a doubled effect: better institutional performance and a push towards the future. These two, taken together, will decisively contribute to the quality of their mission. Some dozen years ago telematics was rightly seen as a new battlefield, an issue for growing concern in national policies, and it was more than logical to expect that museums will be "drafted" sooner or later. The society of the total information brings, unlike previewed, the consequence of the permanent and total information war, where existing means fighting. But, the hypermedia and telecom industry are neither our friends nor our enemies. If we cannot do without them, we better join them while we can still negotiate the terms so as to assure the fatal 51 % of conceptual shares. We can either be their resources or their partners. Knowing the difference will mean for museums deciding upon their professional destiny. But, to know the difference one has to have broad vision, self-assurance, uncorrupted (deinstitutionalized) mind and - responsibility - all that is product of a clear, coherent professional philosophy. There is nothing more practical than a good theory. All museums lack it equally, but after hundred years of trying to find it in Museology we should enlarge the ambition.

The new generations of trained curators are the only guarantee of our successful future. Equipped with transferred experience of the profession, disposing with professional intelligence they will be able to handle any new situation and will be the masters of the applied art of heritage communication - new people for new medium. They will find it normal that an automobile museum employs as many art historians as it employs engineers. Working in a science and technology museum or centre will have to mean a creativity which erases the difference between culture and scientific culture. They will understand why Niels Bohr felt tempted to say: "When about atoms, the language can be used only the way it is used in poetry. The poet strives far less to define facts than to create images." It is like he was speaking about contemporary "blip culture". On the other hand - good science is always art and the good art is always a science.

The (otherwise) dangerous lagging of museums behind the advanced technologies and appropriate ways of reasoning explains why most of the experiments applicable to museums happen outside of them and often without them. The future professionals will creatively handle and use facilities, equipment and institutions themselves as the material of their complex, composite para-artistic medium. The logic of their art is that of cybernetics and informatics and necessarily transdisciplinary, transinstitutional, transsectorial and transnational. We are all entering the era of synthesis.

Within the need of professional organizing, one level and distinctive identity is represented by science and technology museums and/or centres. Today's Europe is inspiring and ready frame for it. So, let us see what might be done:

European Association for Scientific and Technological Heritage (EASTH). The membership should not be limited only to the museum institution.

A powerful telematic network of science and technology museums, centres and collections on the level of Europe.

European Science and Technology Travelling Exhibition Service (ESTTES). It should function as a programme assistance, spreading the know-how and serving the "white areas" as a regular help etc.

European Fair of Scientific and Technological Heritage.

It should function as the sectorial public relation event, as a place of meeting and entertainment, and it should accept all the interested parties.

Network of the Science and Technology Communication Units (STCU). It should be formed out of standardized, high quality and easy to operate units. They may be named "Keeping you informed" (On vous tient au courant) or any other obvious way. The role would be to offer the updated, digested, attractive and contextualized information upon the most recent phenomena or developments important in some actual dilemma. These standardized units should be supplied with exhibits by some regional centres, but each installation should have its local accompanying part based upon specific problems, local know-how or traditions.

The scheme of the regular technical, scientific or managerial assistance.

International company in charge of the marketing of the products offered by institutions related to the science and technology. The company of this kind may have non-profit status when related to the Association.

The former area was marked by an effort of exchange, but the approaching one will have to bring the quality of "working together". This latter spares the effort and money while doubling the effects. By understanding the state of the profession and the capacity of the new technologies we are ready for this development. After the troublesome period of the ideological aventure the lost sons of Europe are returning home. They will have to be helped if we wish for a successful family life. Financial component is more a question of technique than contents.

Zagreb, June 1990

## 6. REGIONAL MUSEUMS IN MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY

Regional museum is a basic breed of a true museum. Its existence is, by any standard or reason a logical fact. This is not, however, the case with most museums. Quite a few among them are either the consequence of a certain particular interest of a collector, or any other scientifically or otherwise specific founder. Regional museum is modern by the fact of its very nature. The calls for integrated, holistic approach or totality in its interests is less urgent there, as they cannot be but complex. It has an obvious responsibility unlike an art museum or a museum of locks and keys, for instance. Such a museum is more logical aim of criticism as it is expected to be involved into the life of the community. The imprudence of taxonomic division of the complex field into scientific categories, ending up in a respective research and permanent show, there shows as a true sin.

Any definition of region, except the administrative one, implies the indefiniteness, extensiveness and lack of obvious boundaries. This original meaning of the starting logic for the regional museums I like more than the one that suggests division and competence over certain administrative territory. I am afraid that most of the regional museums do not behave according to the same preferable understanding of what a region is. Administrative limits are not always the ones that correspond with the spread out of a certain identity.

By the beginning of this century we have had "heimat museum" and "musee de territoire" in German and French speaking Europe respectively, whereas, Great Britain claimed the term regional museum. Identity in France is question of national strategy, and this is why the frustration with the traditional regional museums was rationalized there earlier and better than elsewhere. Fifty years ago they had a concept of "musées de thèmes et des pays" and "musée de synthèse" and latter on "musée d'identité". By the end of sixties it was "musée de l'environnement" and at the beginning of the seventies there was this invention of ecomuseums. From all the three sides we have had claims that "ecomuseum" is an unnecessary, preposterous invention trying to give a common name to all the differently named regional museums. Of course ecomuseum concept existed before it was baptized. But so was the case with any concept before the synthese occurs and the name is given: there were Columbus before the one with glory, there were Copernickuses before the Earth was put officially where it belongs as there were Darwins before the book "Origins of Species" changed the world. As cooperative venture, an institution belonging equally to the local population and to the curators, ecomuseum is certainly a regional museum but the correct one by definition, the programme put into the title. Ecomuseum concept is thus a challenge to traditionalism of all museums, but quite specially to regional museums. Taken as philosophy and as approach, this concept is not a model, neither as a type of an institution nor as a standardized practice in it. It is a constant call for the incessant effort in de-institutionalization of museum, a call for breaking of all its boundaries and limits in order to serve the community best.

### MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY

But community is many things. Community is not equal to public. Community is prevalently non-public. It is composed of divergent variety of interests and levels, and maybe even different ethnicities. In the narrower sense of the term, we deal actually with the situation of multiculturalism. Almost any society is and always was multi-ethnic and therefore (although not only because of it) multicultural. Like in the case of ecomuseums, we discover what was there all the time and yet it is a discovery as it enters our scope of practical concern. We become officially aware of our debt towards the integral society, not only its preponderant part, be it by majority or by power. One almost feels tempted to dismiss the theme as spending time on the obvious. Yet, the practice is so restrained by servility and numerous other inadequancies and inaptitudes of museums that what is obvious stays

still an ideal objective. Professional speculation (if one fatally rejects the need for a professional philosophy, be it museology or something else) tells us that the practice is not an unifying factor of the world's museum scene. Whatever is the practice and cultural background of museums in the Western, developed world, it is entirely different from anything of the kind in Asia and Africa, to take extreme examples. Things differ much already in Europe. There's no way to compare the post-historic society where ethnicity means local tradition expressed on the occasion of annual feasts, and the society still under the strain of its historic processes. Ethnic culture there may have a political aspiration and we may easily be confronted with the birth of nations, like in the geologically unstable zones where a new island may come up to the surface of the sea. Museums there sink into the boiling chaos as they can exist only as signs and consequences of stability and peace. Even if existing in the zone of relative stability, a museum can hardly treat multiculturalism except from the point of ethnocentrism. Sooner or later it would split into separate museums. This shows an alarming inaptitude of museum institution to exert any usable contribution towards stability and co-existence of diversity where the process is not yet politically defined. I am afraid that ethnocentrism is very much the form of multiculturalism explained or presented in many western museums themselves: one shows the variety only to demonstrate the dominance and superiority. Maybe we should talk about multiculturalist cure for our present museums understanding that it remains an idealist objective. As a whole, museums are "consecutive" mechanisms of the society. They only follow or culturally legalize what is already decided or expected. They are neither pro-active nor counteractive when, by their analysis, the need commands such an action. What is more, they do not possess such an analysis nor the ability to do it, as most of them are not synchronous with their time. When feeling guilty, they always have the scientific interest as an excuse to miss the points of reference. Politicians or clergymen can offer excuses to another nation for the injustice and evil done by their predecessors, but I cannot think of any museum accompanying these gestures by changes in their permanent exhibitions or even in contemporary ones, let alone preceding such a political action by theirs.

Integral in its approach by definition, a regional museum is dramatically sensible to these difficulties. It is apt to suffer more than any other museum the unpreparedness of the museum profession to face the contemporary challenge. Like any other museum, a regional museum is rarely able or willing to include political judgment in its rules of selection and planning process. In the case of museum, it is felt that a political judgment should also be political justice as scientific ethics would obviously command. The easy way out is to give an image of multi-ethnic approach, to include multiculturalism on declarative level and continue the old practice. It is not hard to imagine that this may be finally worse than just ignoring the ethnic variety.

## THE CONSTANT NEED FOR RE-DEFINITION

Ecomuseum concept was that call. Nothing else. It is not science but your user that you serve. As society changes dramatically, so should its museum: it has to respond to the changing needs. With the so-called privatization of museums we started to talk the language of business. "Value for money" is the paradigm we hear more and more. We are threatened daily by the new inventions as "performance indicators". The big idea is that society, through its representative bodies (that usually like to give an image of saving taxpayer's money) check our effectiveness in order to punish us by spending still less on whatever we do. Some of this pressure is coming almost too late, as we already have a rising concurrence of heritage industry. When trying hard, we have pretended to be entertaining in our scientific discourse, whereas they successfully give the impression of being scientific in the amusement they offer.

I doubt any museum, be it regional or specialized, could be as entertaining, but we could be probably needed. Multi-ethnicity is only the hardest problem and therefore a long term objective. But the system we talk about is the same: indicate a need in your community (-ies) and fulfill it! If it is an inadequate level of tolerance, do your best, by using everything the past offers as experience, to

propose the sane solutions. A regional museum is needed when perceived as active participant in the communal life. I doubt a regional museum or any other in fact is there to offer final truths. Its insight in the wide and profound quality of certain problem, and its ability of presenting the problem in the form of an information space are unique tools. Its ability to bring about the "real" testimonies in form of palpable objects is the outer shape of the "museum fidelity" so dependent upon (what we like to believe) objective science. Therefore, a regional museum is an ideal tool of democratic insight and preparatory for an exchange of arguments. It should be perceived by all as a mechanism of social transparency, a meeting point and a forum. An auditorium in a regional museum should be constantly running as an alternative local assembly, not really offering lectures upon Mondrian to the few bored snobs, before being sure that all the ugliness and beauty of the region is being presented and discussed. Frustration, coming from an ethnic group or any other group, should be treated there. I do not imagine that a regional museum, poor almost by definition, could be covering everything concerning the life of its community. Yet, the relevance and prestige thus created usually pay off and are readily assisted. They build up a moral argument which makes any claim for finances sound like a rightful request and not like a humble begging. The curator of a regional museum might finally enjoy its natural importance of a precious troublemaker or troubleshooter, depending which way should his action help (the quality of the community life) more.

Constant redefinition is exactly implied in this willingness of the authorities to induce the self-reliance of museums. The new contract they offer is a touchy matter which requires a ripe profession as a partner. Once functioning, it may mean a final introduction to the autonomy of museums. This would mean less security but wider possibilities of an independent action. Mentally, it equally implies that museums could finally be counteractive mechanisms of the society, aiming their actions towards corrective effects in their respective region and society. The seemingly vague concept behind it is balanced, sustainable development of the society in all the facets of living. The museum there appears as a regulative mechanism of the inevitable processes of change in which identity is an unstable, fragile coherence dependent upon the catalyst and corrective action.

## CASE STUDY: YUGOSLAVIA

A country composed of six republics, five nations, four languages, three religions, two ways of writing and one party was not likely to survive. After the world war second, the Party declared the national question of former Yugoslavia solved. The new Yugoslavia was a sealed pot with steady fire under it. Serbia, as the majoritary nation tolerated much of the doctrine of the proletarian internationalism and South-Slav integralism as it also assured its domination. The first outburst of nationalism at the beginning of seventies was destroyed by force: the leaking pot was sealed again. The second one brought the bloodiest war in the recent European history, started by the frustrated dominant political and cultural identity and accepted and assisted by frustrated others. The Party was a Stalin's disciple: it prevented all the nations in Yugoslavia from having their national museums of culture and history. What was there were some surviving structures of pre-war period with denied need of development and growth. The same was with regional museums: any national dimension except ethnography was "mal vue", badly regarded by the party officials. So, museums could neither safeguard nor promote and assist what was the substance of national being. The need was there but they were at first prevented and then unable to respond to it. This was a lack of quality input, scientifically supported (as it should be in museums) and as a result the national mythos was growing into a wild, distorted and manipulated jungle. On the contrary, there was one sort of museums (scattered all over the country), created by Party that enjoyed its lavish support: museums of the Revolution. Using objects and documentary material, much photos and texts, all of them taught the story of liberating the country from the German occupation and local fascists, and that of bloody international conflict. Upon this truth, badly presented though, another theses was proposed: all this was

possible because the Savior Party knew the prudence of leading all successfully out of the chaos. This was not altogether wrong either, at least for the war years, but the way was fatal: these museums generated steadily highpitched hatred against Germans and the national warring parties. The hatred was good to have: it made the Party's merits more evident and it kept enemies alive - still another reason to have the protective Party around. We all know that museums are mechanisms of continuity, and they have to be that way, except when they are concerned with wars, battles and revolutions. Then their continuity becomes counterproductive. Generating hatred brings evil grapes of intolerance and revenge. So, some conclusions become possible: the multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism, the very substance of Yugoslavia, was double crossed by the Party's melting pot project, by the lack of identity protection and by the generation of conflictuous feelings.

Museum did absolutely nothing to clear up the heated medieval campaign of "blut und boden" that was building up the war atmosphere. Once the war started another confirmation of the inherent importance of museums came about when museums and monuments were bombed: they were attacked as alter ego of identity itself, Dubrovnik being an example which no literature on subject will omit. Again, museums would only show the amount of the aggression avoiding any tone that could soften the rights and arguments as any side would prefer them. It is not the objective of this analysis to measure the sins of warring parties as they anyhow resemble any crime: always look for those with motives and gains. Museums only follow obediently the wishes of their masters and try to serve them best.

## AN INTERMEDIARY CONCLUSION

What does this example of Yugoslavia show that may concern our profession, be it on regional or national level? It shows clearly that museum provision must be based upon natural need and scientific corrective input and that it can, although not being decisive, either help or harm the life of the community it exists in. It also demonstrates the fatal lack of autonomy towards political and economical forces which is harming seriously its future. This extreme situation in Europe makes it obvious that most of the other European museums suffer from the same insufficiency hidden in the democratic disguise - an illusion possible when there is a prosperous peace. One should conclude, it seems, that museums are only meant for peace and affluence - a sad and disappointing thing, especially if we count with some prosperity of our profession. Who needs a friend and partner that becomes useless in hard times? An academic question, indeed, if we never define our mission clearly. Defining mission implies deciding who are the true bosses of ours. It implies moral obligation, responsibility and the risk of counteraction. In this direction we might find the relevance we deserve as a powerful mechanism of wisdom. As for the true bosses, it cannot be but a community around us with all its given diversity. As a medium of metamorphosis museums should be able to turn this multicultural inconvenience into richness and advantage: an idealist goal but worth the effort.

## DEFINING THE MISSION OF REGIONAL MUSEUMS

Any mission statement is a document of ethical commitment. Its usual form, if it exists, is thronged with big words and importance of understanding among people. A regional museum belongs to the entire community even when it is composed of many ethnic i.e. cultural entities. As any other well understood museum would have it, good regional museums are striving upon giving an objective analysis on the community structure and its needs. This objective effort is also very much commanded by the scientific nature of museum endeavour. Any scientist, like any museum curator would know how difficult it is to maintain the objectivity in the world defined by interests. And, as it curiously happen, what costs the most pain proves rarely successful in practice. Not many seem to appreciate

this sharing which to them is a pale image of what they imagine as their own interest. Ethnicity and culture are both subjective categories by their very contents. They express themselves subjectively and like to feel (or like to be felt) as one and only. Every culture has enough reasons or motives to believe in its own ultimate uniqueness and therefore the natural right to be treated accordingly. There's an aura of exclusiveness around any specific culture which makes it subjective in all its ambitions. A culture shows a generous tolerance only if it feels overwhelmingly secure in its dominance. Sooner or later, depending upon the strength of the ethnicity involved, any distinctive culture will try to serve its particular interests by creating its own mechanisms of continuity and affirmation. The fact that this separation is more often than not inspired or led by political and economic forces, does not change much. It is not a secret that museums are given full "autonomy" only when they fit the patterns of the governing forces of the society.

There are two positions in the configuration of a multi-ethnic society in which the coexistence of cultures does not necessarily pose any inconvenience. One is rural, where cultures are predominantly expressed as folklore still lived. Museum there may propose a further insight into the still practiced culture, but the identity stays vital by its own force. The other is urban situation of big cities where multiculturalism is a fact of living; the unifying factor there is the international culture as the majority of population sees its own culture(s) as belonging to the past. They become an art form detached from the everyday living in which all the members of the community dress, behave and speak the same way.

Neither of these extreme positions (certainly oversimplified themselves) does not correspond to the typical situation of regional museums. When they deal with living ambitions and frustrations of endangered ethnic group and its culture, they have to take the risk of a moderator and challenge the unrealistic, improper claims by corrective input. They should not give the last word, but should widen the context and insight to enable any decision or opinion making. The permanent show is the materialized mission statement of the museum. It can be further clarified and distinguished by temporary actions whose best objective is an immediate need.

Museum is relevant and estimated in proportion to what it gives as protection of diminishing values. It is not as simple as researching them and presenting them consequently. That is the old unsuccessful pattern. It must be able to pump them back into the body of culture, refreshed in their self-consciousness and reinforced in their ability of autonomous action. This is why a traditional museum can only be a core to the heritage action, a reactor to the process of perpetuation of culture(s). Anything museum does, no matter how far it may be, both physically and conceptually, from its storage and its glass cases, is justified provided it gives life back to what would otherwise be degenerating. This mission is very much different from the traditional one which implied "Medusa's touch" freezing everything the museum lays its curatorial hands on. Such a museum does not preserve culture to be cloned in a laboratory but it keeps alive its inspiration and vital energy, its ability to develop and change by itself and in its own right. Once understanding its role in this way, museum curators need only academic knowledge, vocational zest, talent and imagination to move in the successful direction. The harsh reality has it that most of us dispose only with academic knowledge, but that being only a fourth of what is needed makes us a feeble partner to the community and a weak adversary in fighting for our mission. Thus it might easily be that we lack more than we like to admit when trying to fulfill our role: a strong profession (able to fight efficiently for its status and the importance of its mission), and a convincing product (that would stand higher on the priority list of the interest and profit driven society). The recent invention of sustainable development paradigm (where we are indispensable) gives some hope that others could push us towards accomplishing our mission.

SOME CONCLUSIVE ADVICE

The ideal of museums must be an unobtrusive, discrete omnipresence. But the institutional logic of museums would like it differently, as any institution likes to show off in grandeur and sumptuousness. No doubt such museums that underline, even by their physical appearance, the prestige and importance of the identity the present will exist as museums are all too often the obvious part of frivolous ambition and vanity. The profession is then housed in those palaces to worship the installed myth. Like cathedrals built, the splendid museums are evidence their institutionalism is supported and their religion cherished, at least by those who distribute the public money. The public itself, and even the potential users are themselves conditioned to like the public prestige of the reigning powers. They feel they can share the importance. But as in religion, the real faith can be practice in cathedrals too. Our profession, as far as it can influence the cultural politics, should however build chapels and shrines wherever possible not to raise the importance of religion, but to announce the presence of the Identity and help it survive. And even then, one has to know that Identity is not in a museum, like God is not (or, only exceptionally) in a church.

After this period of ascent of nationalism when we can expect the last wave of national museums to be created or renewed, people will turn still more to their regional values. A Region will be the *donjon*, the last tower of the cultural ramparts where the Identity is defended. There, the regional museum must be the physical centre of the heritage action and departing point of a defense strategy, i.e. a centre of a network of museum outposts. This way it will acquire its natural place in the life of the community. It will acquire a new ability to reason on the level of common sense, to be able to talk to the people around, and be influenced by what it hears. Its true greatness will be confirmed in the faculty of covering or touching the extremes at the same time: that of scientific relevance and that of a banality of everyday living. One of the problems of any modern society is the need for justice in coexistence of different ethnic groups and their cultural expressions. A regional museum will again be the basic level to treat the problem and itself a measure of the progress we make.

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Six questions of an interested layman
2. Identity – a reflection on a crucial problem for museums
3. The Prologue to a cybernetic museum

## 1. Six questions of an interested layman

Having performed on all sides of what concerns the life and destiny of museums, and being myself a passionate museum goer, I often felt an urge to anticipate the questions that our users, both actual and possible could put up. One has to remember that those laymen are often in the position to decide upon the destiny of our profession and its objectives, either as tax payers or as consumers of our products. Being a part of established culture, museums are rarely publicly questioned which makes them rely upon their traditional public or upon guesses whenever they want to meet the true interests of their community. Lacking thus the indispensable feed-back, museums are in a delicate and vulnerable position as, less and less their destiny is decided upon only by the powerful administration. Any museum consultant has been too often faced by decision makers who have neither knowledge of what is heritage and why it is needed, nor the patience to listen to the long professional explanations, let alone posing questions. There are many among the laity who think they know too much to pose them while others think they know too little to admit it.

Do we need museums at all?

Yes, we do but not because it is a notorious feature of any cultural society, as of is usually understood. The reasons are deeper and more important. Museums are there to help us continue with our identity, to secure the vital presence of the collective memory. As such, they are a constant reflection upon the past experience and, therefore, a possible corrective in our present and future. Museums contribute to our self-knowing and are effective means to know the world around us both in its spacial and temporal dimension. In this sense museums are a vital agent of any society. Without them, and kindred institutions, we would be exposed to the loss of the vital forces that guide the change and make a sustainable development possible. It would lead to the loss of identity with all the fatal consequences leading to decadence and disappearance.

Why do we witness the explosion in museum growth?

Museums are effective defenders of identity, – any identity that they stand for: a painter, an archeological find, a city, a region, a craft, a theme of natural sciences...The unprecedented rate of change in the contemporary world is virtually endangering the existence of any identity we can think of. In some reverse deduction, whenever one sees a museum happen, some identity is in peril. Moreover - they resemble a pacemaker as they are being installed wherever there is a dying heart of heritage. Museum growth is therefore an immediate response, specific to our culture, when curing for the disappearance of features that (we feel) constitute our identity or, more widely speaking, of our environment. Statistically speaking, we witness a birth of a new museum in the developed countries of Europe at the frightening rhythm of one to two per week which illustrates well the extent of the drama. Knowing that mass inscenation and musealization belong to the legitimate characteristics of the post-modern paradigm does neither explain nor evaluate this fact. The reformist museological theses would admit that "museums grow like mushrooms", but points out to the fact that not all of them are eatable. Why? Because the problem is there, and museums are rightfully perceived as a way to protect the collective self from it. Yet, the profession concerned gives but a limited range of solutions which all (with exceptions, tough) belong to the former times and their circumstances. It is therefore true that museum response is numerically correct but

qualitatively insufficient and inapt.

Why should museums be discussed outside the profession itself?

Because, the profession is facing a very serious conceptual crisis. The fact that museums grow in numbers proves only that they are needed and by no means that those museums are needed. This profession is, by the nature of its endeavor, very vulnerable to traditionalism, all sorts of passeism, and quite apt to sway into some conservative conception of the world. Museum profession is one among the very rare ones that is described even in the legislative acts as of a very specific and top important for any society and community. Yet, most of the curators are only trained in their basic academic discipline while their profession is learnt in practice – costly and highly irrational. Furthermore, museums are needed in the dramatic changes of the everyday life, which requires much wider consensus about their role, and consequently, of their profile, responsibilities and their financing. Museums should be better known by all the decisive forces of the society as they represent a mighty tool for many purposes. So far, the capacity of museums was used mostly in the sense of science (inner professional opportunism) and in the sense of prestige (external opportunism of the preponderant forces of the society). Education, communication or participation in the development stay, partly or completely, unnoticed chances. Out of numerous reasons this profession has been so much self neglected that it might require external help to take up the full scope of its responsibilities. Being of strategic importance in the survival of any community, museum and related professions, should hear what is expected from them, i.e. to what problem they should give a satisfactory answer and with what pragmatic effect.

How can museums serve development?

Within the already mentioned paradigm of the contemporary society there are many things which call for different institutional and non-institutional action on the field of collective experience. The time is post-historic and post-modern. The historical distance has ceased to exist as we cannot afford it. We accepted the "processual" judgement as the part of the required immediate action. Museums, archives and alike are places where the collective experience is stored. There is no use saying that it will serve well our descendants. It has to serve us now, as we have to be able to keep this world in its usable shape. We are getting back to some values of the primitive society inasmuch as having an urgent need for the multidisciplinary experience that can help in the present decision making. On the other hand, the democratic procedure requires not only educated but also sensibilized population, the one aware of the full impact of their decisions. An enormous task in which museums play only a part, but the part being played actually is alarmingly small. Museums, as data banks of three-dimensional objects, as a sort of three-dimensional story on many a subject, act as a sort of a "biblia pauperum". In a quite important sense they act as a sort of a cultural blood bank and sort of a golden countervalue guarantee of its relevance. The structural "leakage" of once very divided dichotomy of development between scientific/economic forces of change on one side and cultural forces of adaptation is now causing even reverse methodology: some economic development programmes start with cultural projects. Culture is more and more business-like while science and technology are being culturalized. Important and internationally recognized museum projects become an attraction and creators of a stimulative atmosphere. It has been calculated that every job in museum creates 1,7 jobs outside, but this analysis could not measure the indirect effects of self-consciousness, local pride, international image,

recognition and dignity – which all could be decisive factors in some developmental schemes. Culture has always been indispensable underlying structure for any development. In economic growth it could help by supporting the local know-how, by attracting prestigious investment, by creating stimulating atmosphere or by requiring complementary services.

What should the decision makers do about museums?

Help them. Once recognized as important for the society, but not only as a prestigious ornament and a showroom of the local achievements, museums should be regarded as one of the priorities. The factory, a certain technology or things alike can be bought or borrowed, together with the appropriate experience and know-how. How can one obtain a culture, the lost identity, the specificity that is so fruitfully reflected on everything we do? The tourist industry knows dramatically well how the most ordinary human reactions make the basis of an important public revenue: countries without distinctive character are hardly attractive for others. They are used (which implies disgrace and poverty), not truly visited (which would imply dignity and revenue). Like educational system, the heritage care network that includes museums should be an object of the constant governmental and cultural policy care. The collective experience of the past, if analyzed correctly and presented creatively will act as, indeed, "magistra vitae", a sort of a usable wisdom. To do that, museums have to be recognized as such, have to be supported so that they become able to assume their mission. This will eventually mean their autonomization so that they are not dominated by the preferred projections of the different power structures.

What is going on in the world of museums?

Apart from the unprecedented growth, we are witnessing the raising variety in this quantity. But, to tell the truth, it is becoming difficult to say what is growing and with what effects. The professional world is seeing that old definitions are practically useless, and that the former institutional or even theoretical constructions are obsolete. This total change happening in front of our eyes is however a gradual process, so it may not look dramatic, and can therefore be easily minimized. Museums tacitly consented to play the role of a panache of the helmet of the conquerous mankind. They actually assumed more the role of the scribe to the ruler than a partner with some corrective tasks to do. Becoming introvert and self-occupied museums demonstrated the bureaucratic nature of its concern. They maybe have tasks to perform, but out of that busy activity they do not see that there is a mission to be fulfilled. That is true when speaking about the majority. This very majority, feeling that there would be a need for a theory to match its importance, invented Museology at its proper science. A hundred years have been spent in trying to make it a real science and the failure might finally become obvious. The "constructional error" of this clumsy vehicle is the insistence upon the institution, museum institution as the central problem of this discipline. Now, for some two decades, coinciding with the upsurge of ecomuseums we may say that a shift is taking place that will make all the development logical and understandable and consequently change many a definition. The great convergence of the heritage concerned institutional sector has already started due to the inevitable, double-natured logic: the logic of the unifying mission and the logic of the informatics. Rearranging these institutional forces will gradually build up a *metanoia* of the entire set of professions, not meaning indeed that any of them will diminish. The changes will adjust and amend the present state as well, but, indeed, apply seriously only to those to come, institutions and professionals respectively. What is already being required

from heritage care is the demonstration of the cumulative force and therefore it will happen. Thus, the newly established institutions will not only "do the same old job with the new means" (K.Hudson) in some sort of a technological disguise, but will have to be changed by this very technology (as quarter of a century ago, we heard by McLuhan that "the medium is the message"). The magical word of the future will be "heritage", which will give its colouring to the new types of institutions, new procedures and new performance. Traditional museums and "information space museums" will coexist within the context of the new amalgamated media of heritage communication. Vanity and the wisdom will take the form of creative expression inspiring the vitality and making the survival possible. The future is already there; it is only that we have to recognize it and adjust it to the best of our needs.

## **2. IDENTITY – a reflection on a crucial problem for museums**

Identity, as any serious analysis would show, is a complex matter. It may be easily a true name for the object of museums. The traditional museum piece, an item, a three-dimensional fact, is only a data of a complex of museum information, of a message. We do not have museums because of the objects they contain but because of the concepts of ideas that these objects help to convey. We are lately rather successful in getting rid of professional myths and prejudices, so there is hope again for museums to survive through the inevitable conceptual, technological and informational transformation.

The majority of the problems of the contemporary world, as has been the case many times before, can be regarded as identity problems. The clash between the two masses of different identity may amount to a war even. The era of Great Transition or of the Great Anxiety (as A. Toffler would say) is era of change. There is no easy way to live out the changes, to catch up with them, to rationalize them, as we were trying to do so far. The result of these powerful forces of change is the global identity crisis. Totality indeed means that the crisis does not leave out anything: there is no area of theory or practice that is not constantly shaken under the pressure of fundamental changes. We were accustomed to accept the warning within so called cultural identity because it seems to be the essential part, at least the most tender one, within the psychosphere. But what about nature? Changes happen day after day in front of our eyes and we seem to cope with them; the question is, however, do we agree with them, can we agree with them and what do we do if the answers are "no" as it often the case. To put it in the most simple way - the identity we should be speaking about can be divided into those two categories, that of culture and that of nature. When trying to define the relationship between identity and museology, we must take both phenomena in their widest scope in order to arrive at relevant conclusions. In our sense identity is anything that contains enough centripetal, cohesive forces, anything that has enough arguments to be regarded as a whole. The difficulty arises from the fact that Museology is not a defined science or, more clearly, there are quite a few definitions and no consensus. That is why we shall again have difficulty in progressing towards defining any further relation of Museology to other phenomena.

It is clear, however, that after a hundred years we are still speaking of the "status nascendi" of Museology. It is clear that Museology is still too much tied up by its very name. It should be clear that this is not inherent only to traditional museums: if we narrow its scope it becomes sort of Museography; if we widen its scope it will certainly surpass the traditional museum. So if we accept the risk of making Museology a theoretical body that covers diverse agents of the similar area of human activity, we may arrive at defining, not the institution, but the phenomenon that is the basis of Museology. We should call it the total heritage, the total identity. Museology is not about techniques but concepts; it must be an active, corrective, cybernetic philosophy, – and thus reflect or structure the mission of the contemporary museum, depending upon the case.

The message of museums is to prove that we are not connected to the past only through myths and mementos – that the past is the soil from which any identity grows. It also demonstrates that the consciousness of the past is by itself the form of affirming identity, and therefore the form of a survival model. The predominant feature of the museum mission is the defence of identity, i.e. its continuity. If the museum treats only the past without linking it to the present, the pejorative name of a morgue suits it well. Museums of the past containing only silent objects do not serve the cause of life but that of death. Since the fate of museums from their

very beginning is technological, it will be most interesting to see how far we can get in restoring museum objects to life.

A Mexican writer, Carlos Fuentes, was asked in an interview what problem he thinks would be central to Latin America. He did not answer that it was democracy, economic difficulties or political dependency. He clearly stated that the problem is "to create the national identity", claiming that there were too many imitations in their history, too many of those imposed from outside. It is not a mere coincidence that by the same source of inspiration one of the best, though old, museums in the world has been created - the Anthropological Museum in Ciudad de Mexico - as a magnificent, prestigious, metaphor of national Mexican identity. So, what do we finally have? As always, a number of questions to be answered, or at least to be posed.

Museology can be defined only if confronted with its basic vocabulary and then checked, adjusted, reformed in the time of change. If we succeed to do so in satisfactory way, we shall have to admit that museums, especially if we take them in their traditional sense, are not the only institutions within the field of heritage: the necessary definition of museums might still cover traditional museums but must allow the incorporation of all the diversity of agents whose field of work is the transfer of the human experience of nature and culture.

If we accept that the field of museums is identity and if we are analyzing its approach to that, we shall be actually trying to define the contemporary museum; the definition will certainly be more tuned to Rüsselsheim, Le Creusot and Haute Beauce to take but a few different examples than to the Louvre. The theory would define the philosophical paradigms, should fix the aims and clarify the motives. Due also to the lack of that theoretical basis, to the lack of philosophical essence of our work, we have highly bureaucratic and monetarized museums; the only side of them partly opened to advancement is technological: they are singing the same old tune but in much clearer, high-tech voice. So – to say what the role of museology is will mean deciding what museology is.

What can museums do about the endangered Planet of Earth (the Spaceship Earth, as Buckminster Fuller would put it): it is being transformed drastically and dramatically in front of our eyes. The crucial question arises whether the lost harmony between man and nature can ever be gained back. Identity is "vis vitalis" of things and humans, that is what made the entire environment and brought us here through time: are we committing suicide by the mere disregard for its vital importance? Besides being a part of a search for the survival model, the protection of identity has become very much a fundamental ethical issue. As constant reflection upon the objectives of the profession, Museology must give answers.

The growing interest in museums, a boom indeed, is not the success of our policy as much as it is the effect of the global identity crisis for which a counterproductive means is searched. If you seek a good provocation to motivate your contribution, just remember that most of the world is suffering a despair of acculturation: Africa, Asia, South America... There are numerous nations and religions, even in Europe, subdued by other, bigger nations and their culture. Neocolonialism starts by conquering the soul, by subjugating the local culture and then progressing towards economic and political issues. Just remember China, India, the Second World War, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan... We were only counting the dead but what about identity loss, what about people without a past, deprived of their collective memory: can we do more for refugees than just saving physical lives? What should museology say and museums do about the elimination of Indians? Still speaking about identity, let us contemplate the horror of the drama of the world of nature. Nature cannot fight

back, it can only be spoiled and ruined, it can become a hostile, unhealthy environment and that is exactly what is happening. Can we tolerate that some ten thousand species are irreversibly disappearing each year from our planet? Can we accept that nature is being pushed into reservations? Should we tolerate that bioengineering interferes with the natural order (if it exists any more)? Does our professional and ethical concern end up in the proud possession of the last specimen of the exterminated species? Are museums here to document passively the disastrous trends, or to do something about them? Museology is dealing very much with the future of our past, the future of our identity, that is, our future.

June 1986

### 3. THE PROLOGUE TO A CYBERNETIC MUSEUM

Some of you will remember that there was the time when the idea of development was practically indisputable. Development was advancement and fight it or suspect it was acting against progress. The two were synonymous, anyhow. After the rebellious sixties, revealing seventies and active eighties the myth of progress is dead: the profit makers are desperately looking for suitable disguises whereas the post-humanists are seeking for supports and strategies to fight them. While the conflict of greens vs. pollutants became a notorious part of our daily routine, we also witnessed a shift of emphasis towards the culture and quality of life in general. Namely, there's a development in culture too. Being a part of a rapidly changing world, it also changes. Since this rate and rhythm of change became dramatic, our interest in the quality of change is more than justified. The very idea of "sustainable cultural development" implies therefore rightfully, that there might exist also an "unsustainable" development. And, that distinction is exactly what we ought to talk about. But culture is a general, positive category, like love, for instance. And yet, there's nothing we could imagine as "too much love". "Unsustainable" love would therefore be some perverted fixation that ends in the loss of freedom. Consequently, unsustainable cultural development is a degradation of culture, its negative projection. Any culture is an opened, vulnerable structure that reacts very sensitively to the changes of environment. I do agree with the thesis that counts the perils (F.Schouten, 1991): over-population, uncontrolled introduction of modern technology, urbanization, booming of tourism, rapid changes in infrastructure. And there are obviously more to add. Yet, these are merely first cohorts of the two armies of cruel invaders: acculturation and internationalization of cultures. The first is a sort of generic substitution; the stronger or more aggressive culture takes the place of the one it has defeated. The second is an entropical monster, a sort of black hole for cultures, more a process of constant degradation than a cultural entity in itself. Acculturation is obviously more of a problem for the so called undeveloped part of the world, that is to say, a cultural disease of the poor.

It requires little creatures of the south seas thousands and thousands of years to build a magnificent coral reef, a living environment for thousands of other creatures. Yet only a few buckets of some liquid used or wasted within our development machine are enough to make it a dead underwater desert. And what is the difference between this coral reef and some local culture, say in Asia, built and cherished for some six thousands years? Their quick end due to insertion of devastating foreign cultural substance makes the parallel even more obvious.

Internationalization of cultures is a disease of rich, but of the poor too, as the latter always get their fair share of any evil. As the world is being enveloped into the media sphere, we are still enchanted by the possibility of simultaneous happening. The logic of power and profit forces us into networking which is formalization of new spiritual dependencies. The East has been defeated first of all on the level of media, creating an illusion of superiority of western culture, western technology and western way of life. The chance of critical insight was lost by this intrusiveness and local denial of freedom of choice. Newly opened, former communist countries in Europe will expose their disorientated citizens to the long experience of being second-rate westerners. The East of Europe like the Western world, will then turn faster and faster within the whirl of the international culture. It is an instant, mass product of media, under the pressure of the predominant forces of society, – of power holders if you prefer it simple. Each time you sit in front of your TV set or open the newspapers you are being stuffed with "Natreen" sweetened directives what to eat, what to wear, what to think: a culture created in laboratory to be worn throughout the next season. Maybe this is somehow ment to

be that way in the global village of ours. But if we have to loose, let's die giving at least some resistance if we cannot be heroes. One should believe that museums could play a role.

Knowing the enemy is obviously a starting point of any resistance. But, we have to match his actions by some counteractions. What is the enemy's strategy? I believe that the most important part of it is the obstruction of the natural transfer of cultural experience. Culture is, indeed, a coral reef: it is a permanent effort of continuation and change – a change within the continuation, a process prevailingly guided by a set of vital forces that form the core of its identity. If out of any reason the genetic message is not passed over to the next generation to sediment, we witness the process of degradation or death.

The imposed speed of changes in our technological environment is such that leaves us no time to adapt and to live like productive cultural beings. We are turning into technological beings, more and more dependent upon our technological environment. Technology is quantative and expansive and we are simply not given a chance to reflect upon it: that is absolutely an unsustainable development. That is the first strategic subsystem. The second, and there may be many more, is the media content that functions as noise in any natural transfer. Its efficiency ends up in substituting the inner vibrations, it blocks spontaneous collective creativity, it obstructs the fine sedimentation of collective memory and transforms us into cultural zombies. Technology is hardly used to follow the logic of individual culture so that culture could adjust it to its own syntax.

Now, how do we fight back? By activating our "counter-irritant" system. Among many mechanisms invented as extentions of our natural abilities, I like to think that museums are important enough. The claim would be that they can do something about cultural development, making it, say, sustainable. But before I try to explain this mechanism, let me burden it with still another responsibility, to make the discourse complete. We have talked so far about the need to moderate the development of culture, by a set of protective actions, but the right approach would be that we also "attack" the very forces which produce the "aggression". Attacking would obviously mean an ambition of influencing the development forces of society in a corrective manner. The dichotomy of development always consisted of forces of change and the forces of adaptation. In the primitive society these parts of actual dichotomy (of dualism, maybe) were a compact unity. There was no dissonance between the mechanisms of civilization and those of culture as they formed a whole. The material culture was firmly entangled with spiritual. Pragmatic objectives were vitally linked with the collective experience that the defects of the latter ment serious drawbacks or disaster. Well, nothing much changed in this gambling with the Destiny: the survival game is the same, only the stakes are breath-taking.

The obvious problem in the contemporary society is that this natural unity of change and adaptation does not exist. Therefore homo faber is gaining an advantage over homo ludens: the two hemispheres of our brain are not in harmony. The Newtonian machine is grinding us all: machine induced logic responds to any need by designing new machines. We live the apotheosis of the cartesian, rationalist era – a dangerous time in which even museum people (though only exceptional personalities, like D. S. Ripley) mention survival and salvation as our ultimate goals. But I do not think this culture of ours has ever understood the logic of this machine: the Newton's third rule says that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In the man-regulated world things may not be that regulated and it happens somehow that the actions taking place within the sphere of material culture - a sphere where our technical genius is governing – are not matched at all from the other side; it does happen that by having

more we happen to have less and by being more free we are more enslaved. The cartesian devil is buying off our souls: an illusion a piece. We are already seduced deep into a bewitched forest. Can somebody, our museums for instance, show us the way to the sunshine? Or, if unable to do so, do they make just another torturing illusion within this wicked plot? Most of them participate involuntarily and unconsciously within the processes of the conquerous western civilization and its cartesian ideals. Museums are misused. More and more, addicted to the same set of quantative objectives, they represent a medium of high energy flow. Contrary to what a highly informatized society would need, they themselves turn the past into a quantative perfection. Unusable, as they become in this way, they are often forced to chose: either they protect themselves by a scientific aura, or they cede to popular needs on commercial basis. Both ways they betray ( and now, the "magic" word comes) their *mission*. Only the "third wave museums" (Šola, 1985) – still a minority among museums – can successfully enter the post-humanist syntagm in which they perform a role of a counteractive mechanism. By acting this way they can reach usable messages about the reigning Uncertainty - not by denying it but making it an acceptable human fate. By profound understanding they can provide.

Museums have to be formulated on the logic of dialectics and cybernetics; both of them explain the evolution of things in the terms of tension between two poles. "In dialectics the tension between the theses and antitheses creates synthesis; in cybernetics the tension between the threat and counteractivity produces stable balance capable of maintaining the norm" (van Dajn, 1982). Without exaggerating we could however claim that museums might be effective in this broadest sense of necessary homeostasis that would, if not prevent, then slow down the processes of entrophy. By beating the entrophy there where it is created we might also be able to get better results in our effort to continue the cultural codes. As one among the mechanisms of self defence, museums solve nothing, but can contribute to a possible solution considerably. This idea of counteractive reaction is much older than cybernetics – we can trace it in our cultural circle back to Hypocrates. He used the term ponos to describe the defence effort of a body in an illness. When McLuhan is talking about "equilibrium as a strategy of governing force of any body" I understand it as fundamentally cybernetic approach. In this sense the governing force of the society (if the society intends to live and prosper) should be culture - spiritual culture. One could be well aware that this is not the case at least from the Renaissance onwards, but we have good reasons for alarm when seeing that the civilizational forces (be it profit or "just" the prevalence of "to possess" over "to be") took over the entire control of our spaceship Earth.

The main idea behind existence of museum is continuation. There is always an identity, different in its complexity from one institution to another, which somebody wants to continue. One of the ways to do it, as we have conceived was through a museum institution which seems to envelope a well defined process of collecting, research, care and presentation. That's museography. The moment we start to ask further questions as: why, how, for whom, with what aims, etc., we might be dealing with upper level of museography which, if high enough, may earn itself a disputable name of museology.

Much within museums is mere Vanity Fair. If certain Mr. X wants to earn himself eternity by bequesting his collection (for which somebody has yet to build a museum; sic!) this could quite easily fall out of the range of our interest. There the museum institution is circumstantial and likely to be misused. There may be no other logic in the existence of the particular collection (or eventually a museum) beyond the personal interesetes of the collector. The community may recognize collection's potential as relevant to its own history and

development, but not necessarily so. Such museums have little choice in their existence: they can either be attractions through the material value or fame, or they can turn into institutions for scientific research. Describing the prevalently scientific institution by naming it a museum is misleading as the name would be appropriate only if the institution is public, user concerned. On the contrary, those museums which from the very beginning had an ambition to document and be used for the sake of continuation of certain productive memories, certain know-how, some ideas that illustrate the logic of the present vital forces of the society or a given community etc. – those museums are our rightful concern. They seem to be following this inner logic of museum idea, which we, eventually, may call cybernetic in its communicational, corrective quality.

Our museums should enable us to understand the world and our place in it: "The simple message of cybernetics is: Understand yourself! Look at what you are doing!" (van Dajm, 1982). And that, without adding much, seems to be a sound basis for museum mission. We, as individuals and collectivity, we have to be well aware of what we are and what we are doing. Museums, as they are now, do not help us: they prefer either scientific aloofness or nostalgic passeism as both approaches are well tolerated by the power holders (of which museums are dependent in many ways) and by the educationally conditioned public. Behaving like this in a living environment they avoid their responsibility. Revealing the true nature of our problems, of the nature of this civilizational and cultural paradigm, of the true needs and true troubles, would mean denouncing the causes; that would lead to critics which means putting oneself at risk. When one indicates the problem and sees the cause, it makes poor cowardice to ignore it. Closing oneself in the ivory tower of science is therefore likely to be an intentional escapism. One should not claim that museums should behave like Greenpeace activists (although, personally, I have a lot of admiration for their direct action), but turning the head away from harsh reality is irresponsible, unfair towards the tax-payers: it's lacking human dimension and can hardly support the "raison d'être" of a public institution. Museums, as democratic institutions (and it has to be true for the most part of them) have to offer this precious opportunity of self-analysis, of insight into the totality of processes in the community (and outside of it) that are relevant for its functioning; they have to serve as information source, as reflection premises, as forum where democratic decision making is given its information substance, where argument is obtained enabling the users to form correct dilemma.

By understanding the actual world around them, museums can make the proper use of their potentials and by applying the stored collective experience to adequate situations around them they achieve the quality of participation. In this way they start to share the same destiny with their respective community. If they are to perform their true role, they cannot be governed by the forces of profit, as it is exactly those forces that create perils the museums should neutralize. It seems that museums are not aware of this universal manipulation they are exposed to. Like in any other institutional sector, this lack may cause a profound crisis. Although museums grow at an unprecedented rate everywhere, it does seem possible to talk about that crisis already.

Counteractivity becomes possible only if we know the situation, i.e. the size and range of aggression. So, obviously, two things are important: knowing the world and knowing the medium. First thing is attainable when we realize that our present is the only logical point of departure and the sole point of return whether we want to explore our past or foresee our future. Both of these questions are very much a theory of the profession. Whether museums like it or not, the past is always changing, it is being constantly re-thought and re-evaluated. This is a spontaneous process, done by natural urge resulting from specific circumstances of

the present. We usually invent the past that suits the best the value patterns of the present. Since this is to a certain point inevitable, the problem is that this should be done as a rationalized, controlled process and therefore highly effective for the ethically correct purposes.

Museum is medium. Knowing the medium is the first prerequisite of any correct action and use of the full capacity of it. Yet, only a well defined profession could be capable of such knowledge. Many people working in museums have perfect knowledge of the museum institution and its working process. Yet, they are unable to use it beyond its inherent administrative logic, they do not perceive it as a tool, as a means, as medium to achieve effects outside of the immediate institutional logic. The ability to understand the medium is preceded, or indeed it stems from it, by the profound understanding of the museum idea, not only museum institution. They should be there as public service, to assist and help towards awareness and understanding, towards the better quality of living. Yet, they can hardly move any further from a mere distribution of knowledge.

The same way as a museum profession should be able to use the past in the most appropriate way, it should be able to adjust and change the very museum institution to the changing reality around it. The level of frustration has risen so high by this inability, inaptitude of profession, that we have to make an urgent effort in this sense. But, like in many other a profession, when this call for change becomes obvious to all and everybody it then might be quite late for it. One adjustment is however done promptly: the change of technology. Buildings become more luxurious, illumination is changed, new apparatuses are introduced... The way of thinking, the only decisive thing among all, stays the same. Therefore, the task of theory (I do not say museology as it is supposed to serve only a limited range of heritage care institutions) – the task is therefore, at least doubled in its nature.

Generally speaking it would be, again, cybernetic in its ambition to change and balance the existing tensions. On one side one should see it as an eclectic, critical discipline, able to filter and synthesize statements about the needs and frustrations of this world of ours – so that they can serve as a basis for heritage concerned institutional policies. It is a sort of an autonomous apparatus for self-guiding of the profession and for whatever it stands for. If wishing to play an important role in the society, to acquire importance pertaining to a mechanism of collective experience, museums and similar institutions must have this sort of ability to maintain an evolutive critical definition of the world. They have to aware of what past is and what should be a desirable future of the society so as to be able to add themselves to the collective effort of continuation. On the other side, its task is obviously the profession itself. Again, processual in its character – with a cybernetic action as a final objective – it has to provide an opened, changing definition of the profession, able to anticipate and receive the current and future developments. It has to be a theory that functions as a critic of institution, and the critic of profession itself.

Many theorists demonstrated embarrassment but only a few have expressed their impatience with museology being "in status nascendi" for more than a century. The problem was in the fact that it had tried to grow out of the museum institution: it was (and still is, in fact) institution centred and one can hardly think about any scientific discipline of the sort. There was one thing more: the science of Museology as proposed was referring only to the traditional museum institutions. Part of the kindred institutions (like zoos, natural parks or science centers) were admitted to ICOM (due to the logical response to changed circumstances) but would not fit official scientific schemes. We needed a central concept

amidst this institutional configuration and I have proposed that we name it "total heritage". Their common philosophy upon their common theoretical denominator was therefore named "heritology". (Šola, 1982) The comments were extremely discouraging but practice, which is the best friend of any right prediction, invented a whole range of hybrid institutional forms whose existence can be rationalized only in a wide opened concept as the one proposed.

Heritology did suggest the centrally positioned "sun" that sheds the light of its logic across the planetary system of heritage care institutions, yet it only made possible a further experiment towards a terminological convention. Maybe a term that would suggest the nature of that theory itself, a way to hint its essential content. This is how Mnemosophy was born (Šola, 1989). It should be explained as cybernetics of heritage. It is an information science. There are some slight chances within the present convergence of heritage based professions that Mnemosophy once becomes some "general theory of heritage", a sort of theoretical common denominator to, at least, five information sciences: librarianship, archivistics, museology, encyclopaedistics and documentalistics. How long and how far the protagonists of different specialist disciplines will resist the logic at least by trying to obtain to their proper sciences an indisputable scientific aura, one could not tell as many things in this world happen contrary to "sensus communis" anyhow. It is a science about future of the collective experience – about the future of the past. "A philosopher is one that loves the vision of truth, of wisdom", says Bertrand Russell. Nothing can fit better an ambitious science and nothing can apply so well to museums and institutions where entire human experience is stored so that the truth can be preserved and that it serves as a source of good advice for the life in present. *Historia est magistra vitae!* Can museums give back some dignity to this abused lady? Cybernetics is there to colour this theory suggesting its preconcieved efficacy and purposefullness. It is by itself a science about the laws of the information flow, and that is exactly what museums are doing: they make and process the information. Cybernetics can also be a general theory of systems and general theory of regulation. Moreover, it is a theory of guidance of processes and communication. Be it inner museum working process with the eternal antagonism of scientific and communicational concepts, or the role of museum in the community – this cybernetic homeostasis is just what we might feel as our fulfilment. If philosophy is only a segment, a cybernetic philosophy (an intentional pleonasm) is there to suggest a vector instead: a difference that, I believe, exists between a statement and a message. It took museums about two hundred years to demonstrate this difference. As there is no "churchology" or "schoolology" but theology and pedagogy, this science is centred upon the concept of heritage, as to total collective experience, all inclusive, spacial and temporal. It includes the entire environment (defined in its utter complexity as it was proposed a quarter of a century ago by McLuhan).

As for the uneasiness that one feels in front of curious product that bears neither certificate of the scientific community nor of the glorified practitioners, one should remember that staying with definitions upon the level of memory, collective memory, as substance of museum activity is just another proof of its exclusively quantative character. Museums grow in number and in size like inflatory currency: the quantity never corresponds with value. Thus the blooming museum world, a true institutional explosion is, paradoxically, a solid proof of profound crisis. The endangered, diseased civilization fighting for the survival of the richness of its diversity, is producing institutional antibodies that are, at the moment of creation, infected by the same symptoms. Most of them, at least judging by the new museums created. They are turned into placebo pills due to the inaptitude of the profession which is not able to see the mission it has to perform. This theory should help us in creating an important profession. The beautiful informatics that should help us to understand ourselves better and

extend our reach, is turned into the disguise of the profession unwilling to face its change and, as consequence, turning itself into a deep crisis. Understood properly, information technology can only show us what we lack: if the mission is not reformed we shall be able to create perfect and total but useless memory, as we shall be afraid to accept that our medium is essentially creative. The selection of data during the process of abstraction and analogy is a great responsibility which ends up in information and messages used in the purposeful communication process. If our memory is filtered through such a process, the result is necessarily a wisdom. The memory (greek: mneme ) is thus further determined by the quality of wisdom (greek: sophia). Thus, the information about the past becomes a message from the past – a usable wisdom.

The museum institution deriving from such a theoretical approach one should rather not call a museum in order to widen the concept and allow the distinction towards the cybernetic counteractive version of it: a heritage action unit. A true reformist, unlike the false one (that of technological disguises) has a profound respect for the tradition and exclaims with conviction: leave the good old museums as they are, but, for God's sake, make the new ones new!

What can this "new Museology" do for the community? It can create usable museums and the profession with the well defined mission of serving for the community's welfare. Putting the dead body of a culture in a glass coffin and proclaiming it a care is, most probably, a cynical act. This suicidal civilization of ours is replacing the dying hearts of cultures by the glossy, marble institutions. A magnificent "pompes funèbres". But, is it not true, that if you want the heart to beat vividly again and the body of culture develop sustainably, you will attach to it an efficient, fine machine – a pace-maker. But, that's Hypocrates' ponos, a defensive effort, resistance – life principle, a hint about the cybernetic museum.

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## II MUSEUM INSTITUTION

1. An introduction to critique of museums
2. Old vs. new
3. Museums and development
4. The role of museums in developing countries

5. Science and technology museums
6. Regional museums in multi-ethnic society

## **1. An Introduction To Critique Of Museum**

If there would be the argument for the reform of theory of museums, - one should see it in the lack of self criticism. The theory should project as much as it should evaluate. Itself, first: *Ab ipso Lare incipe*. If a reformed museum is there to help people live better by understanding the world around them it will necessarily mean evaluation of the reality, past and present. To obtain this right of criticism, one would be obliged to impose the process on oneself. The lack of constant evaluation may lead to the inability to adjust and change, a deficiency that, as it seems, shatters the very future of traditional museum. Criticism is bad if it ends in cynicism and it is good if it becomes a programme for a reform and affirmation of hope. Quite often one would hear that we provide what our public requires. But public is a specific group of pre-conditioned followers on one hand, and unable to understand the nature and the capacity of our profession, on the other. One can however develop the knowledge, experience and understanding of the needs of our public as well as those who pass by our open entrance doors without an urge to come in. These presumptions and the understanding of the nature of our mission should lead to projections which indicate the frustrating difference between what is offered and what should be offered.

If our users need a museum of sound, we offer them a museum of musical instruments where an amazing quantity of original musical instruments silently witness the history of instrument design.

If there is a need for a museum that would cultivate the taste for esthetic expression, we give a palace of whitewashed walls with material substance of art coded in the artefacts.

When people need the understanding of the Mother nature, we offer them either dead animals or those imprisoned in the concentration camps of zoos.

For explaining the origins of our civilization and culture we usually offer a three-dimensional handbook for students of archaeology and ethnology.

If there is a need to make people understand their local history and acquire the sense of identity, museum profession presents them with the history of rich and noble.

Urgent, incessant need to understand the technology, its logic and capacity, becomes thus, in our museums, a review of its triumphs over humans and nature.

As for its own needs to have a philosophical basis of the professional mission, the profession prescribes itself a constant cure in increasing quantity of technical skills and new technologies.

Thus, when we all need more wisdom, inside and outside of our museums, we are all given still more knowledge.

Museums are still dwelling upon false myths of omnipotent science, of superiority of man

upon nature, of finiteness of knowledge, of a rationalist dream that gave rise to the myth of progress. With the appearance of *sustainability* as approach in many areas of human endeavour, it may seem that the myth is finally abandoned. Yet, it will not be finished soon as it generates the right of the present world to continue as it goes, run by the present motives and powers. Museums are their legitimate expression. The progress has been assigned the moral quality of advancement and was a secure shield to the brave, combative efforts of the power generating structures of the society. Indeed, it should have always meant a rising quality of living be it avoiding war conflicts or keeping the air clean and waters clear. Once it is rather obvious that progress has become synonymous with poisonous mud that our world may be turning into, museums have to assure at least their public if not their tax payers that they are on their, positive side. The problem is not a simple one: "faith in progress is usually implicit in desires to improve the past" (Lowenthal, 1990).

The few centuries of humanism were a fascination of mankind by its superiority to the nature. Once aware of the entropic effects, we see most dramatically that we are only, yet the most dangerous part, of the natural balance. Our ever increasing knowledge was however used only to destroy that *homeostasis*. In the new syntagm of *post-humanism* its arguments may now contribute to redefinition of the place of human kind in the Universe.

The past is invention of Renaissance; before that time it has been lived and lived with. Museums could have not existed before past and once the past, or the need for it was there, it was the question of time to see the need taking up an institutional form. What was then discovered as reaction to Middle Ages and inspiration for humanist revolution, became a tantalizing nightmare. "Neither the dreams nor the nightmares of revisiting the past are less intense for their seeming unlikelihood. Moreover, they offer clues to what it is of the past we truly need and can accept or should avoid or reject (Lowenthal, 1990. p.34) The civilization that ventures into a such a great toil to preserve the past is having a creative crisis and identity problem. That explains why museums were founded in the eighteenth century. As crisis is indeed there, museums and other institutions from the field of heritage should provide the useful effects of preservation of that past that help survival. Yet, what they produce is ever more past. We still live in the quantitative age when museums also reflect the prevailing rule in which more always means the better: more museums, bigger collections, both ever increasing will reach the limits of physical growth and force the profession or the museum owners to pose the fundamental questions upon the true nature of the institution.

Instead of helping people to overcome the problems of today and prepare for usable future, museums remained public exhibition of repositories of past, a place where one is not confronted with possible images of truth but with deceiving visions derived from a distant past that avoid any resemblance to actual problems. Yet, interests are recognizable as the past is always anew tailored to suit them. Those interests are pertaining to a group or a class, the true owners of museum medium, and museum is used to transform them into public values. Museum offers usually a solemn presentation of our ancestors; being a temple to the past virtues it fond of its educational impact as it likes to demonstrate that all of the kind that come will enjoy the same glory. In its representational choice of what to collect, the storages of museums are like treasures for a victorious, triumphal procession of the modern civilization.

As modern museum proves unable to transcend its own institution, it is equally unable to transcend the past itself and face its final purpose. Trying to act like a scientific institute, most of museum job is analysis of the past without daring synthesis usable in comparisons with the present. This is why museum is essentially artificial and ex-temporal. When you see in a

museum anything resembling true life, you must be facing a window, not a glass case. Unlike any other institution, museums have to break the barriers between the "exact" and "social" sciences, as only in this way the reality could be given back the quality of entity.

Living through its Confucianist phase of institutional development, modern museum likes the rules, order, classifications, formal atmosphere and science as a guarantee of all that. It likes more any new technology than philosophical or poetical discourse that dwell too much upon imagination and instinct. Regarding itself a scientific institution, traditional museum likes to rely exclusively upon "objective" methods of experiment, description, observation and verification. It likes more to create knowledge as a scientific category than conscience which may imply knowledge but bears ethical obligations. Memory is a complex for an easy manipulation and it is true that any possible danger may easily be avoided by relying upon "objective" and conflict-free scientific approach. The same way, museums rarely talk about hazard and contingency in whatever their subject may be. In that respect they rely upon conservative science.

In its nature, modern museum is also part of that big eye of our alter-ego by which we observe ourselves incessantly, depriving our action of true participation in anything. We all live like in a film and act like being in one. Unlike our predecessors, we are not truly in charge of our experiences. Instead of being a place where some of this substantial relationship is re-created so as to be used outside museum, a modern i.e. traditional museum remains one of the institutions where life is "played" for us. Contemporary people associate little, their life is flooded by substitutes for any real experience. They do not associate with art and artists, let alone produce art, but go to art galleries to "enjoy" it. They do not play instruments and sing together but go to the concert halls. They do not cherish human relationships and emotional connections but read books and go to the movies to see how others do it. The life, as true experience, becomes something for others, and, as museums suggest, for those passed long ago. As we seem to be turning into the virtual world of shadows, museums offer us one virtuality more, – that of the past.

Besides those general reasons, the true cause of this detachment is scientific obsession of museums which keeps any creative, imaginative and artistic development of museums at a safe distance. Without proper theory museums will remain unable to find the necessary balance between science, at one extreme, and entertainment on the other. As basically communicational institution its basis may be science but its discourse and art are that of theatre or film.

The caricature of an absent-minded professor lost in the scholastic questions of his specialist science fits too well to the image of a traditional curator. This public imagery, unaware of the pitfalls of professions, depicts well the self-exclusion of certain professions from the perils and risks of sharing the destiny with one's natural users. Helping to revive the dead past we fail to see the living things, people or their values, – in the need of survival. Museums are for people, – to enable and support the quality of their living. What cannot pass this major criterium in museum theory and practice, cannot be but criticized with a hope of change towards the better. It is therefore necessary to propose arguments and scales for constant evaluation, so that final result becomes a double gain: the survival of the profession and the efficiency of its service to the users.

Museums are there for the identity and because of it. The moment they become models be it in their architecture or in their working process, they deceive their inherent nature. Any

identity to which a museum can be a protective mechanism requires a specific form of preservation and continuation. This sin becomes most obvious when museums are established in the world outside the European, Western cultural circle. These museums formed upon the European model perform a role which may easily be contrary to the local culture to which a museum institution can be a foreign, imposed body. Upon which basic assumption are our museums founded? That man is good or evil? Does this question matter to them at all? If it doesn't as it may rightfully seem the case, the intention to have them serve the society is rather questionable, as well as their communicational ambition. Without ethical commitment, museums may well exist upon people but not for them. One famous director of an equally famous art museum said publicly only twelve years ago: "As for the visitors, we don't mind their coming to our exhibitions". Much has fortunately changed since then, but sometimes only in avoiding public statements of the kind.

The critique's aim must be honest, so that, even if true and painful, it isn't malicious and destructive. Its aim cannot be but providing a comprehensive inventory of weak points that the profession has to be aware of in order to revise its theory and practices. Purified this way, it should be able to face the imperfections and compete for its own place in configuration of institutions. Any professional attached to the museum cause will know or feel that we cannot give up if we wish, that once conceived more or less clearly our mission is not our voluntary determination. We have to try hard to accomplish it and we can only be denounced and slowed down either due to our own deficiency or due to the creation of other mechanisms that do the better job.

The critical points, as partly explained in this introduction, will figure in any serious attempt of critical analysis of museums. The entire list that merits further elaboration may be a rather long one.

## 2. Old Vs. New

Many times in the professional literature or communication one hears the syntagm: old and new. We have found in many museological gatherings and discussions that even the basic terms are far from being commonly understood. Either we say the same and mean different or we mean the same and say it differently. It is not my intention to solve the problem that would require more than ambitious project of the existing *Dictionarum Museologicum*: we need a vocabulary, that once in the process of being made, will also demonstrate that we actually talk about whole new, appearing profession.

These opposites are certainly simplified to enable easier understanding. There is no such situation in reality where, in a such clear confrontation these extremes could be found. As no traditional museum institution exist without some elements of advanced practice, there would certainly be no reformed, new institution we could not perceive bits of old practice or philosophy in. This is to say that characteristics from both sides of the following list often coexist in the same professional environment, sometimes in the very same institution. Needless to say, history has taught us that not all that is old is necessarily obsolete as it may have relevance to the complexity of the needs that museums should serve to. Therefore, this simplified concept may have a tautological value so as to make things obvious, – to make clear distinction between opposed concepts. Some elements that are referential to the museum working process or to the theory being formed around ever expanding configuration of heritage preservation and care, do not appear here as they are necessarily the same to the both theoretical extremes that we simply name "old" and "new". The first category stands for traditional, taxonomic, second wave museums. The second category stands for the new, reformed museums, museums of development, museums of time and space, all hybrid forms within the area of heritage care, for the third wave museums.

The world, even the one of museums would be very simple if it could be put in simple pairs of opposites. Then, even those who thought there was no choice possible at all, could be convinced that a choice should, however, be made. But we are offered nothing of this simplicity. This list is, therefore, but a reminder of the possible extremes rarely found so clearly opposed in the living practice. Such a simplification, so beloved by all who prefer accumulating the knowledge to acquiring, appropriating the sensibility (that provokes in its turn the professional intelligence), would still need the entire effort of interpretation to become effective. Would it be possible to see from it that the prevailing idea of this difference is the implication of gradual but constant change in cultural sector, including museums? Would it be possible to deduce that we may talk about the amount of change that may lead to the entirely new quality of this human endeavour? Is it clear that we may now talk about the post-modernism and cybernetics in museum world in a way that does not imply all the risk of visionary hypothesis. The world of traditional museums may well continue to exist and it should indeed in the proportion of museums representing a part of heritage itself. The rest is change and adjustment, necessarily leading to the new quality. It is, like always, paradoxical that those who will suffer the change or carry it out themselves, will never be enough aware of the fact. So, to those who will have to be convinced this list may serve as a brief reminder, however imprecise. To the others, who are agents of change, it will consolidate and support their claims.

PREVAILING CHARACTERISTICS  
AND ORIENTATIONS OF  
TRADITIONAL MUSEUMS

product orientation  
object orientation  
analytical  
specific  
specialized  
passeist  
rational  
scientific  
formal  
solemn  
normative  
finite  
final definitions  
affirmation of order  
preference of positivism  
  
"objects speak for themselves"  
estheticism  
production of knowledge  
disemination of knowledge

informative  
educational

PREVAILING CHARACTERISTICS  
AND ORIENTATIONS OF REFORMED  
MUSEUMS

process orientation  
concept orientation  
synthetical  
contextual  
multidisciplinary, complex  
futurist  
emotional  
popular  
informal  
relaxed  
flexible  
opened  
evolutive, opened definitions  
preferes organization  
expresses and provokes dilemma,  
questions and speculationsees objects as  
interpretive start  
information space design

mediation of experience and wisdom  
encouragement of understanding and  
creative ability  
communicative  
"cybernetic", corrective  
  
impressive  
prestigious  
extensive  
possesive, conquerous  
using technology to ameliorate the existing  
methods and procedures  
seeing museum as a closed complex  
  
serving the preponderant forces of the  
society  
presenting research

collecting "eternalia"  
implying the logic of good investment and  
market value  
nourishing the myth of the original object  
presenting the scientific truth

scientific orientation comprizing users  
static  
objectivity through historical distance

"working for the future generations"  
heritage as "invaluable relics"  
conflict-free notion of the past

heritage of the privileged, important,  
wealthy, exceptional  
friendly  
modest  
territorial, communal  
protective  
using technology as transforming the  
museum medium itself  
seeing building as physical centre of the  
action  
seerving the comunity and common  
interests  
takig research as a basis for the  
presentation  
collecting "ephemeralia" and "quotidiana"  
excluding the material value judgement  
  
accepting substitutes and support material

uses scientific argument to present visions,  
questions, doubts, possibilities  
users orientation comprizing science  
dynamic  
objectivity through honest risk of real-time  
evaluation  
acting for present users  
heritage as viable, collective memory  
past as history of confronted interests and  
possibilities  
heritage as totality

### 3. Museums And Development

The entire history of the museum as an institution shows that we can speak of it as having existed as a true institution only during the last two centuries. The museum constitutes a comprehensive and legally regulated process based on the dominant characteristics both of the process itself and of the position assigned to it by the community, that is to say, its politics of culture. Since the museum institution is not subject to rapid change there will seldom exist anywhere in the world a legislature which would, either in its spirit or demand of practice, be ahead of the institution that it regulates. In short, it is usually a matter of congruence, which results in a reduced challenge for either side to move forward. In other words, it will transpire that any analysis which is even a little more serious, would deal with that relationship as obvious confirmation either of the thesis that the importance of the museum receives insufficient recognition, or of the claim that museums are not satisfying the specialized and social needs incorporated into the legislation.

But whatever the case may be, apart from some general obligation that would implicitly indicate some effect relevant to the forces of development of a society, the museum is being abandoned to the traditional understanding of a culture as a place that on the whole is too prominent and too rarefied to have a more substantial social role allotted to it, as determined through some definition. In its nascent stage (we shall refer to this stage and subsequent stages as First Wave, Second Wave and Third Wave) the museum as we know it today did not exist, and therefore analysis have some merit only insofar as it constitutes research into a phenomenology that was to lead to the creation of museums. Consequently, no definition could have existed at that time. The raising nationalism that was culminating during the surge of the industrial revolution was cognizant of scientific precision and had a high regard for classification systems. The civilization of Wave II created its museums, modern museums, which still represent a valid museum syntagm and associated definitions. When we are speaking of the West, i.e. civilization of the Wave III, we are speaking of the only remaining constant which that world has: permanent, dramatic change. Due to historical circumstances museum activity is falling behind the majority of other professional institutions because of its inherent nature and through social inertia. Its entry into Wave III of its development, which should also be its own attribute,<sup>1</sup> becomes somewhat decelerated, but the future of museums, a future the beginning of which we are experiencing currently, started some twenty years ago through the inception of the patent of the ecomuseums. This is how museums embarked upon the stage of their own development which again, at least in its early days, was marked by a loss of definition. This is a sign of the critical position of the institution during a period of transformation in which one qualitative form, through all highs and all resistance, becomes a new one. Ranking them high or low, defining what is advanced and what is backward, belongs more to the position taken from totalitarian political systems than to life that is imposed by life.

An innovation wins recognition as a gradual change of relations, rather than by revolutionary leaps which would serve to negate the professional experience of the past. If we take the innovation of ecomuseums as a case in point (although this is by no means the only novelty in museum activity) it becomes obvious that the essence of the proposal is not the radicalism that a new model would impose. Indeed the way of thinking "in models" is contrary to the very concept of a reformed museum. Therefore, the main source of inspiration— at least for new museums — should be the identity upon which the museum is created and which it must serve. The result of the constantly differing requirements for another identity must always be a different museum. At the end - and this is the point of the logic suggested by an ecomuseum to all museum activity — the museum must serve, in the finest sense of the word, the community — not only in its prestige and pride, nor at its embellishment and praise for its achievements or the glory of its great history, but also in its

development. Up until recent times definitions of the museum institution made no mention of development. The oft-mentioned Round Table in Santiago de Chile (UNESCO, 1973),<sup>2</sup> where a new social relevance of museums was referred to for the first time, ended with a proposal for a reformed definition, which again failed to make mention of the components participating in the development. The ICOM 1974 definition, still valid today, defines the museum as a "permanent, non-profit-making institution in the service of society and its development". Why is it important to have this obligation included in the definition itself? It is because the legislature compels and, usually concurrently, manifests the level of professional consciousness in a given professional environment.

The identity is divided into civilizational and cultural values. In the past two centuries humankind has experienced progress as a development of civilization (technology and production relations), as growing material wealth. In recent decades the victorious western civilization – victorious both in the sense of its domination over other regions of the world, and in the sense of dominating nature – definitely had to deny the myths which it had created. It is clear to us now that the syntagm of development, of progress – i.e. advance – is much more a philosophical or cultural category which seeks for its meaning in the universal eurythmic than it is a technological problem. The technical effect has lost the natural regulating mechanism, the duty of which is the contemplation of the need and reason, and then an anticipation of the consequences of the action. It was to take almost one and a half centuries for it to become apparent that the museum institution is not merely a decoration for a brilliant tool of the victorious industrial revolution.

Today, all learned debates which concern themselves with the central problems of the profession emphasize the relevance of development within the museum institution. Outside this even a quasi-philosophical consideration (but not an erroneous one) in which a museum may be recognized as a corrective counteractive, as a cybernetic mechanism fact (along with all similar institutions, of course), there also exists a new understanding of development. Even the most serious theoreticians of the future and analysts of the present are in agreement that we are entering a new social paradigm – the cultural society, i.e. a society in which the dominant feature is culture. We are now at the beginning of a new decade for which UNESCO is, as during some earlier ones, attempting to provide a dominant orientation which on the one hand would recognize the demands of reality, and which on the other would define priorities that the world must give special attention to; in its recognition of global processes UNESCO has named this decade the decade of cultural development. It is curious to observe the manner in which the four major groups of ambitions, even at first glance, relate to the mission of the cultural dimension of development, the recognition and enrichment of cultural identity, a greater participation in cultural life, the advancement of international cultural cooperation. For the purposes of this paper it is sufficient to draw attention to the first point, which emphasizes the need to acknowledge the cultural dimension of development. This will be exceptionally difficult for those countries in which museums and culture as a whole are treated as a form of consumption (despite declarations to the contrary uttered by politicians).

The dominant social forces in a society, the economy (in which the making of profits is a priority) and politics (whose priority is to strengthen the hold on power) will readily accept the importance of the museum where it involves the development of various forms of patriotism. They will also understand, to a degree, the need for the scientific dimension (but will not try too hard to support it), while in the less developed countries the vision of museums as a counteractive, democratic mechanism of insight, education and social self-regulation, will be considered as an illusion all the more acceptable the deeper they are hidden within textbooks. (Both businessmen and politicians are in agreement – or at least they publicly declare themselves to be so – within the necessary transparency of decision making; but when it comes down to important decisions – involving

political, strategic, ecological, recessional and other consequences – these are then presented as ready-made.) It is therefore merely Utopian to expect in the near future that museums will become a part of wider professional and social verification. These are the reasons why the community loses several valuable possibilities – from the possibility of motivating and of mobilizing an ever widening circle of interested parties, to the possibility of making useful, long-term decisions, as well as the possibility for the long-term strengthening of a positive image of a centre of power.

Being informed is one of the essential characteristics of a cultured condition. Stated in economic terms, a person prominent in cultural life is usually also a productive worker, one for whom a collective interest is not a question of ideological coercion, but a way of understanding existence. If the dominant political forces have wisely directed their interest towards the real prosperity of a community, they will regard the activities of cultural institutions, and therefore of museums also, as more than welcome. A forward-thinking museum will develop a sound feeling of solidarity within a community which, of course, is indicated by overall historical experience, and acts as a living example of a scientifically-based fact whereby all progress is necessarily dependent upon tolerance. A museum can play a role in the homogenization of individual groups, inasmuch as it can present their history as their negative experiences, which must always provide the reasons for conflicts. It is not oriented towards the teaching of peace and unity through differences as a formula for survival. The history of storing objects in our museums, archives and libraries bears witness to our weakness rather than to the strength of our endurance and advances; it is just the negative capital through which we abandon ourselves to the forces of primeval instincts - and together with a concurrent growth of our technological potentials this tendency is transformed into a promised catechism. On the other hand, the characteristics of an orderly, peaceful social co-existence of different identities and differing interests, to which a museum can effectively contribute, are a development factor *par excellence* within the society.

The traditional concept of a museum (both in museums themselves and in the environment) regards museums as places where the (glorious!) past is studied and where objects testifying to that past are stored (and in part exhibited). The traditional museum has considered it sufficient to restrict itself to documenting that which has gone by. In the following phase it took a considerable time for common sense to prevail and, within the profession, to realize that timely action is necessary in order that the fate of a perpetual reconstruction of reality is avoided. In other words, the contemporary museum has begun a search for a future past in order that the traces of time are as fresh and as eloquent as possible. From that point a logical step led to yet another question, prompted by common sense. If a museum is documenting a certain trade that is disappearing, for instance, is it able to do anything to preserve it in its natural environment, in its real context and, if at all possible, in its function? In such a situation a museum appears as the form of social intervention (and the interest of society was indicated by the profession!) which gives a particular trade a much-needed injection of life that is essential to overcome the critical period until a possible revitalization (if only within some institution of the "industry of heritage"). The mode of reactions of the traditional museums does not, therefore, extend beyond a presentation of alibis for destruction, beyond an attempt to wash the unclear conscience of a community through museum intervention. (Every ethnographic museum is full of such examples.) In short, a museum can – in order to meet the requirements of a community, to preserve the layered quality and the specific features of its identity – conduct an effective action ensuring the survival of threatened skills or, in the case of plastic expression, the preservation of specific artistic style. The formulas for this are many and range from the influence on local ambitions, indicating possibilities for the performance of that activity (or those activities) within the production/presentation section of the museum. This is, you will note, much more than a mere museum shop.

It has become obvious in the last two or three decades when the museum profession is experiencing an upsurge and when museums in general are growing in numbers and size as never before that the museum sector is becoming an interesting area from the point of view of employment. British analyses show that this sector grew by 20 % in the period between 1981 and 1986<sup>3</sup>. Economic analyses indicate that these jobs are relatively economic which, once the selection has been made and the system servicing it has been set, cost is relatively low. At the moment museums and galleries in Britain employ around 19000 people, realize an income of £ 230 m. stg. and make a profit of £ 141 m. stg. Nevertheless, no matter how impressive those figures may be, and they cannot fail to be so in any analysis of the development or economic value of a museum, they still fall short of revealing a whole range of immeasurable, or barely measurable, parameters of their role. Statistics tell us that in that same Britain, which is fast becoming a country where tradition is one of the more important earners of state revenue, new museums are springing up at a rate of one a week. One particular research, dealing with a very successful museum of the "theme park" type (Beamish, in the north of England), showed that every job created in a museum resulted in the creation of 1,7 jobs outside the museum.<sup>4</sup> This logic, reached through the given data only on measurable relations, is lacking in everything that cannot be measured – such as a reputable or a disreputable name.

What is it that attracts us most efficiently to a particular person? The same thing that attracts us to a particular country or to a particular town – an identity: a combination of diverse features, characteristics and their relations which makes that particular identity different from any other. Therein lies the reason for investments in the highly prestigious cultural projects preceding the planned business expansion in many parts of the world. Where a cultural investment results in a creative intervention through the operationalization of a quality programme, a luscious and fertile oasis blossoms forth; a place avoided even by school excursions, as well as by all those considering investing in the economy, suddenly becomes interesting or even in vogue. Land increases in value, different industries appear, development programmes multiply and professional people – normally so selective in their choice of place for their activity – arrive spontaneously. Museums very often form the backbone of such initial investments, their duty being to raise the general condition, to establish a clear relation to the identity of place. Museums and similar institutions thus appear as a form of catalyst and a "joker" of the intended urban regeneration and environmental enhancement.

In the light of this exposition, is it really necessary to make specific mention of the role a museum is to play in the expanding tourism industry? Neither Italy nor Austria are being invaded by armies of tourists who are interested in taking a tour through their transport systems or their factories. They wish to see something different, something that was founded by and which is pregnant with the creative efforts of men. They come because of the uniqueness of their character, both in terms of their cultures and landscapes. And despite the fact that those same streams of visitors often gain little or nothing of the true content which, for one reason or another, they are unable either to accept or understand (and although they may not visit museums and even if they were to do so they may fail to comprehend anything), they will still carry within them an involuntary or suggested fascination, a feeling of experiencing something different, a sense of dignity of differences and, generally speaking, a respect for the fruits of the creative efforts of humanity. All this, in a prosaic effect, the tourist industry extremely efficiently evaluates as a very tangible income. If we are discussing the development of a particular community and even if our ideas were to differ, the respectable material factor constituting an income earned by tourism dictates that we pay close attention to the true protagonists of that industry. Until now the development of tourism has been regarded as a problem of agency management, as those forms of organization necessary for achieving higher earnings. The circle of parameters has been gradually widened and today we are aware that tourism is threatened only when a visitor loses his motives for coming into our region.

Here we are talking about hidden parameters that are difficult to discover even through detailed surveys, but we are completely familiar with them in action. Museums are the institutional form of intervention into identity, able to create valuable contributions to the total environment in which they operate. Besides conserving, restoring, interpreting and re-enforcing the identity they have been created upon and for, they can serve as extremely subtle and efficient marketing for a particular town, region or even a country. One should not, of course, confuse the new museum practice with the traditional museum of superlatives, since a cultured visitor from abroad – and it is such visitors who will be relied upon in increasing measure – knows how to differentiate between the true state of culture and the props that are constructed to cater for the tourist season. It must be said at this juncture, if only as an aside, that taking everything into consideration the best kind of museum for the tourist industry is that which is best suited to the local population. The essential thing is to recognize it. Investments in the tourist industry must encompass those mechanisms of identity since identity, like all other resources, is finite in its duration and capacity.

If the school is a mechanism for the transfer of socially-formed knowledge, then the museum is something more than that, at least in its flexibility and accessibility: understood correctly, the museum is a mediator of collective responsibility. No one can deny the vital importance that school has in the life of a social community, but one must realize that a museum is one of those institutions which, as a system complementary to schooling, facilitates the transfer of cultural codes, thus ensuring perpetuation of identity, i.e. the survival of those constants without which any identity would be left to the forces of decline and oblivion. Theoreticians will often prophesy, at least implicitly, that the school will acquire certain features of a museum, while at the same time predicting an important future role for museums, prompted specifically by the need for flexible mediation and dissemination of positive experience. There are few schools and few museums that teach wisdom – i.e. to introduce one to the way of thinking and the sublimation of knowledge into a specific form of newly-acquired intelligence. The pragmatic forces of development are going to feel an increasing need for that very operationalization of experiences past. Museums are going to be numbered among those institutions that will offer a precious contribution to progress, changing its quality into one of advance (if the latter generates a total, humanistic approach which implies a responsible choice and technological changes based on ethical principles).

The true guarantee of development is a brisk economy and a rich culture. In the world where real work is becoming a form of competition that is ever more rare, all we are left with is a state of a perpetual war of informatics – and therein rests the real power – it is in the identity that its general element lies. Here also we are, quite logically it would appear, returning to the major role of all social mechanisms that would ensure the durability of identity, which is more than relevant to an understanding of development.

New museums will be conceived as centres of heritage and local development on an increasing scale. Traditionalists in the museum world will find more reason to be vexed about it than to rejoice in it, but we are speaking of exclusivity which in practice will be slowly eradicated by the new generations of curators (educated specifically for a career in museums) and by life itself. The secret dream of revolutionary reformists and the secret dread of traditionalists, in other words the threat to or degradation of good traditional museum, is more a sign of a failure to adapt in times replete with change and, because of this, to times of a growing importance of the museum institution.

When we speak of the role that a museum plays in development (or as I would prefer to say, in progress), placing the museum on centre stage, the creation of an obligation for showmanship is neither a good nor a reprehensible thing: it is, as always and in everything, a question of balance.

But the demand for increasing dynamics of the public media, museums being part of them (and pushing them to secure the additional financial means themselves), places museums in a delicate, not to mention a dangerous, situation. The danger is for both, – their own integrity as well as the integrity of identity they are representing and that could result in a catastrophic downgrading of the profession. If viewed in that light, this constitutes an interesting situation in which it is necessary and possible to prove that the profession is in crisis, despite a veritable explosion in growth. Any growth deals with risks of decadence and degradation and may actually be led by their logic. Needless to say, growth in museums as in the society, is prevalently a quantitative category unless we apply to it qualitative parameters. In this respect much of the obvious growth is dubious and should be reviewed in this optic. It is precisely upon this logic that the concept of sustained development came about. Among the forces of resistance to the dominant elements within a society which define the parameters of development, the *autonomous* museum institution may figure as powerful mechanism. Museum institutions are entering an era that will award them an apparently blessed qualification: "business relevance". One should not believe that this link could or should be, avoided, but in the corporate project of the new era the sector of culture should strive to win 51 % of the conceptual shares. However highly improbable it may appear, this should be the daily task in our mission.

Notes:

1. Šola, Tomislav. 1983. Towards the Contemporary Concept of Museology. *Informatologica Yugoslavica*, Zagreb, No. 15, 1983.
2. UNESCO Round Table on the subject of the role of the Museum in Latin America, 20–21 May 1972, Santiago de Chile.
3. Lord, Barry; Dexter Lord, Gail; Nicks, John. 1989. The Cost of Collecting – Collection Management in UK Museums. Report commissioned by the Office of Arts and Libraries.
4. Johnson, Peter; Thomas, Barry. 1990. Assessing the impact of a Museum on the local economy. Breaking new ground: a conference on current research in museum studies. 8–11 April 1990, University of Leicester.

Zagreb, April 1991

#### 4. THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (TÄMÄ MUUTTUU)

The Nehru memorial lecture delivered on December 1988  
at Bharat Kala Bhavan Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

Nehru was a man of vision. Big India was small for the energy of his insight, for the wisdom with which he was able to see beyond and ahead. With him we were all able to see details and variety where before there was only a heap. Like a great intellectual, he lived up to the standard so well explained by André Gide: There is no healthy nation nor the fresh spirit that stays with eyes fixed to the ground - trying to recognize there only graves. He was aware that the modern museum concept i.e. the traditional one was created in Europe (that what he said in conversation with Malraux), but I imagine that he would like the recent development of museums that is entirely based upon denial of any model. The very idea of non-alignment ment alternative and specific where general and uniformed solutions were expected. The movement announced information emancipation, political emancipation, spiritual emancipation - all that meaning the emancipation of *identity* . He was rightly sure that nobody will help underprivileged or just developing if they do not help themselves. It may have been a dream as, anyhow, all the best things are.

Who invented museums? The claims are too eager for professional justification and demonstrate the misunderstanding of the nature of contemporary museum institution. The longer the culture the earlier the idea of heritage protection. I do not say: of museums; the tradition of latter is no longer than two centuries at utmost. India, with its rich culture could put up claims, at the level of some proto-forms of museum as far back as 3000 years ago. Two thousand years ago Rgveda may be regarded as an oral museum, the oldest in the world. I am sure that the connoisseurs of Indian culture could give further arguments through the analysis of Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda...The idea of museum taken in its broadest sense (the only productive one) exists wherever there is an effort to contextualize things and persons within the time and space. It is the evidence of memory and the memory itself. There are no new things but only those that are discovered anew, applied to what has not been foreseeable or combined into new, productive associations.

My intention is to give you some usable reasons for further speculation, sometimes by giving answers to known questions and sometimes by offering new questions. The lecture is like a communion in which a speaker should be able to create a vibration that will set others' spiritual strings to the same movement.

Why is it, really, that only at this point of our civilization  
we need a mediator in our relation to the world?

Why is it that new sciences are needed where always a common  
sense was enough?

Why is it that we carry an obligation more than any other  
previous civilization, the ambition of perfect recall?

Why is it that heritage (in its totality) needs a specific  
action, when it always progressed in time without that added  
mechanism?

Why is it, indeed, that we are the first civilization (or is  
it just the western circle?) to believe that eternity can be  
reached by preserving the physical?

Why is it that still one institutional sector is feeling an  
obligation to teach people how to live?

Why is it that our museums commit the same sin of vanity as  
pharaohs of ancient Egypt?

Or more precisely:

Who needs museums?

Are museum institutions appropriate response to our needs?

What is really the world that brought up museums to their unprecedented boom?

Why is this world trying so desperately to teach people to memorize and to make machines think?

What museums for what world?

Are museums just a result of a bad conscience, an alibi for the inability to control the range and reach of changes?

Why are museums in the herd and not among the herdmen?

Is it not, finally, that our (traditional) museums are forcing the river run up the mountain instead of guiding it around?

The fact is that both concepts, that of museums and of museology are western, or more precisely - European.<sup>1</sup> It is, therefore paradoxical that any European/North American related analysis could be quite usable for the rest of the world. Modern civilization is still hesitating between Socrates (for whom the ignorance was the most important cause of evil) and sophists (who claimed that only efficiency and pragmatism count; knowledge is important if it is practical). Latter on, the rationalism supported very much this pragmatic standpoint. Our museums inherited much of that spiritual state - on the very superficial level, though, as they learn too slowly the Socratic art of posing proper questions about the world they are supposed to serve.

And, indeed, what is that world? Any museologist who touches the question risks to be called "catastrophologist", or at least a "preacher" despised by common museum people that "simply do their job". This ostrich syndrom I do not understand as I cannot tell what an ostrich is thinking about when having the head in the sand. I see no way to regard say art museums isolated from technological museums, like I can neither see museums in general as isolated from other areas of heritage protection. Finally, I cannot see heritage itself as defined, and finished past. The rate of changes in any area of human activity or environment is so excessive that even experts are using the word "drama" to denote it. Only century and a half ago only a billion of people inhabited this planet. As things are, in a decade or two that will be the population of India alone. In the last hundred odd years some 500 species of animals were extinct, whereas we know that nowadays about 1000 species of plants disappear every year. If there are four million species on Earth (which is only a rough estimation out of which museum trace only a tiny portion), it is claimed that 20 % of that number is definitely endangered. There are national and international systems who try to control these processes. ISIS in the U.S. is registering natural heritage and besides all data keeps a blood bank. Even McLuhan who was a theoretician of media sensed well that possible analogy: "The museum has become a storehouse of human values, a cultural blood bank."<sup>2</sup> Although he mentions obviously only the museums of culture the logic goes for all of them. Indeed, speaking about extinction - how many cultures (out of how many tens of thousand) are disappearing irreversibly from the civilization of man? The majority of museums does nothing about it. The key words of all the worry and all the future of museums, and not only them, will be identity and survival<sup>3</sup>. Unperceptibly, this vocabulary exists for quite a while in the works of visionary museum directors<sup>4</sup>. "A global survival forum" - one occasion among many appearing, held in Oxford, UK this year - passed without museums or worlds museum organization involved. This absence of museums when crucial questions are taken up is suicidal behaviour. On the other hand, the conception of museums suits some other time and much different circumstances. From processors of past they became its protagonists and continuators. They are, taken as a whole, too bureaucratic to be able to feel the pulse of life and to retain the ability of adjustment to the changing

circumstances. If they are already a traditional feature of rich world's cultural scene, when exported as a model in countries that fight for basic means and rights, they prove to be practically useless.

So called developing world is burdened with numerous problems: poverty, hunger, excessive birth rate, unemployment, lack of education, lack of housing, mismanagement, political dependency, disastrous acculturation, pollution etc. Confronted with the problems at the very existential level, those countries forget and deny their past subduing themselves to the faceless transnational business as its resource and consumer of its goods. Their museums there are symbolic in quantity and quality, made for tourists and local "foreigners". These museums are neither ment nor able to deal with all those problems that countries and their cultures suffer from. Their reach is extremely limited. So, paraphrasing André Gide one could say that past seems to be a luxury belonging only to the class of owners. Very true, indeed, wherever applied, but dramatically true in the poor part of the world.

The ideal version of our future that transcends ideologies and divisions, the society of total information<sup>5</sup> is also bringing some new problems, some of which we clearly see already. Besides, the vision obviously gets further support, further arguments in the terms of hardware, but conceptually, logistically, we are lacking behind - we are, indeed, stunted. Besides the permanent ecological disaster we have its counterpart in the growing war of identities. There is increasing division of the world into the affluent and poor, into privileged and disadvantaged - into head and limbs. A tendency of transforming the developing part of the world into a rubbish tip of technologies, besides of being a curiously shortsighted solution, is only the most obvious entrophy. The new war is not after physical bodies but after souls. It resembles a global communications market, a world's cacophonous information stock exchange. Continuing the comparison, we may ask what is the sound, hard communication currency of the developing world that should be used in this confrontation. Museums? That answers only a part of question, and even that on a methodological level. Museums do contain treasures, relics, specimens - evidence, and the role of these museum objects can be compared to the golden reserve in state banks. But even the economy abandoned that fashion, the real guarantee of its efficiency and solidity being vivid, creative production and successful marketing. The real guarantee of information potential is sound identity: living culture, effective education, creative environment and systematic heritage care. As it is more important what museums do than what they contain, developing countries obviously need museums that are dynamic, that are able to strike back by keeping the identities vital and productive. Paradoxically, their most strong enemy is within them or in their vicinity: circumstances have installed strong protagonists of international culture and international trends. And yet, museums are just one among the mechanisms that should unite in concerted action. The lack of that unity and synchronization, by the way, is more important problem than isolated, however urgent, problems of individual profession.

It may appear idealistic in this world of ours to insist upon diversities when a whole new logic is being built to make way to all profit. "The west is civilizing the coloured races... (and they) are becoming like us, in bad sense. They are becoming second rate westerners".<sup>6</sup> The majority of educated people in the West do not see it as their problem at all. They would tell: "That's their problem. If they want to buy..." Others are more explicit. But, things are not that simple. Hugues Varine sees distinctively a few propagation agents of "high culture": cultural agents, cultural attachés, detached education officers, cooperation experts, all the Europeans and North Americans travelling to the Third World. This process has got a quality of gradation, of succession where the logic of each import is built upon the existence of the previous one. Or, paraphrasing Bertrand Russell when speaking about pragmatism, "it resembles a warm bath that is heating up so imperceptibly that one is never sure when to scream". Strange things happen to a person whose ideals exist outside of his context, and it may become dangerous if one country's youth start to feel other country(ies) as its spiritual homeland. I hope I remember the words of Nehru, though pronounced in some other time and circumstances: "Freedom is in peril. Defend it

with all your might". Possibility of being what one is, represents crucial aspect of freedom. But the enemy is not that obvious and when it is, the experience is painful and the result very uncertain.

What does a contemporary man, specially the one from a developing country, need? Optimism, self-assurance, tolerance, solidarity, certainty, harmony with the environment and - more than anything else - faith and hope. It looks like a task for many, not only museums - and it obviously is. If past is there for some reason it would be to act as a source of wisdom. It is only in this respect that I take an interest museums and this is the only aspect to be deeply studied in developing countries. Specially there. What, indeed, can museums do? It should go without saying that museums in developing countries should be able to care for additional serious matters, when compared to the tasks of the rich world's museums: "There is no human dignity without putting an end to poverty" (Ernst Bloch). Not that one would expect museums to turn into money makers or creators of healthy economy, but they must make a contribution to development and liberation of creative energies. If they make people realize who they are and what is their identity they help building a solid basis of coherent development based upon one's own strenght.

The analysis of the modern traditional museum model was done many times and we all try to do it daily in our practice. That model I have called "second wave museums", basically a rationalist approach belonging to the logic of industrial world<sup>7</sup>. Modern European museum is a product of renaissance humanism, enlightment of the 18th century and democracy of the 19th century<sup>8</sup>. They got technologically advanced but are following the logic and ambitions of previous time. Museums of industrial man still fail in the famous Fromm's differentiation "to possess or to exist". Rather barbarous in their method to attain the eternity, they suit their world. A range of institutions exist exist, maybe undisturbed in their ways (which is not likely though), but museums are ment to respond to specific circumstances and to grow out of very particular identity. They have to be different as basis of their existance changes! One would expect that Indian museums would be less oriented towards *artha* than European. How could the same museums reflect different worlds? Museological analysis could suggest general principes and outline the basic profile of a third wave institution. The implied claim of this approach is that the difference must continue whether the continuation comprizes the existance of a museum or any other action in this respect.

"The study of education and communication by objects and exhibits should be of specific interest in developing countries, where large populations are in the process of making lightning adjustments to technology and the world of science and modernday life".<sup>9</sup> This process is universal but the tide wave of changes that reached developing world has disastrous effects. The planet is building up compensative mechanisms, and museums are one of them. Nowadays they are exploding in unexpected numbers as usual cultural structure is unable to cope with the problem of "ever-increasing rate of change"<sup>10</sup> What change is inevitable and what is the necessary one? In the "global village" and "simultaneous happening" as McLuhan would put it, it is not solely the matter of blocking the destructive transformation but also of assuring vital and creative response. And, what makes difference to traditional museumum conception, we need that response now.

According to St Augustin, the time is triple present. The present we call so with full right is the only one that exists. The past lives as present rememberance, and the future is the present in expectation. All the ambitions of any heritage concerned action should care for the benefit of actual users. The true mission of museums is the development of fundamental respect for the universal good, through the awareness of the total environment. The aim of museums is future, their "method" is past and their area is present. Whatever we may do in reconstruction of some past reality, it will be always evident that all is there (only?) to encourage and actuate the imagination. Founded upon the scientific exactitude and seriousness, museums are the metaphora of its general forces. They are moving through space and time from barbarous treasury to para-artistic communicational tool, from greed and prestige to love and care, from the principle of possession towards the principle of love. Paraphrasing Picasso who said it about art, we may put that museums are a lie that helps us see the truth. Museums and related, kindred institutions, should be wells dug

into the identity - wells where we can always find the fresh water of wisdom. The wisdom can be attained only by the selective continuation of the total human experience.

The advancing alternative of ecomuseums in the rich west almost attains the balance in the well defined configuration of institutionalized culture. There was, however, enough time for museums to become part of cultural values themselves. That is why they usually find these contemplations either repulsive or just another whining business of undeveloped barbarians. Museums in developing countries must ensure that the vital force of tradition continues, as this "living past" becomes a guarantee of spiritual integrity, obtaining always the stability against the blasts of changes. Very much within the logic of ecomuseums, the developing countries need museums as research centres for the identity in accordance with the cultural/territorial pattern - as centres of action, as awareness generators and, finally pulsating scanners of the total environment. In one of his books J.P.Sartre refers to museum by saying: "The experience is still something more than the defence from death; it is the right: the right of elder." This I quote as I find it fitting well into some logic of traditional societies. And if we seek for indigenous reactions to some contemporary needs (like the one of preserving the past from the aggression of present), we may end up in having an action which would not copy but assume council of elders as - again - a source of wisdom necessary for the spiritual survival. Even the West is seeking for some autochthonic responses, re-inventing the museum answer. In that possible diversity of responses we may finally start to learn creatively, one world from the other. Where and how far will the doubled nature of museums develop? In what direction: that of the theatre of facts (scientific experience) and that of the theatre of fictions (artistic experience)? In that heretic quest for new answers (or: for "answers at all" and "answers finally") all may be put to trial. As an European myself, I must admit that I do not fully understand (or even approve) that the works of art should be framed and mercilessly hanged upon the walls. Something like that might have existed in ancient Greece but it is a tradition of some, maybe, four hundred years. In Far East, at least according to Malraux, and some time ago, the gallery of paintings was simply inconceivable. Rightly so, to my opinion, although I doubt many in the Far East would support me nowadays.

In the situations of advancing poverty last barriers to fall are those of social prestige. It is therefore even more understandable why in many developing countries the shining ideal is Louvre or Metropolitan or British Museum. Such mastodontic institutions cost approximately 200 millions US dollars a year. Their secondrate clones are certainly unable to function in restricted conditions, they do not help local crafts, they disregard local trade, they will not rebuild the temple so that tradition may continue, they do not buy new instruments to local musicians...There is a lot of contemplation along these ideas all over the world, and that places museums in a very delicate social role: they are expected to fulfil too many diverse expectations. Some of these views suggest redefinitions towards para-artistic medium: "Museums can help us to recapture a sense of magic and of awe at the complexity and beauty of the natural world and at the genius and skill of men."<sup>11</sup> And, yet, the grow-ing phenomenon of ecomuseums suggests "combative" and "development" types of approaches. This practice and theory accompanying it are the only usable experience for the developing world; the task of action, research and development (as defined by Hugues de Varine) comprizes complex and multidisciplinary approach. Developing countries, if acting wisely, could not afford particularization of knowledge in the area of public communication, which is, in case of museums, detrimental to the understanding of causality and contributes to the separation of natural sensibility from life itself. It may easily be that the developing world is more receptive and uninhibited when new museum communication is concerned, and what it gets following the logic of industrial imports, are usually traditional and outmoded products.

A museum in developing country must be a temple of national pride, a research centre upon the identity(-ies) it serves, and a data bank of heritage (three-dimensional and informatic) - it must be a showroom of resources, of trade and production and of development projections, it must act as a leisure centre and, finally, as a stronghold of heritage action (including

certainly the environmental aspect).<sup>12</sup>

The crucial condition for the correct or usable development of heritage minded action - or, specially, for any significant transformation of it - is creation of different professionals. The method to do it is the transfer of knowledge and experience. Another name for it may be museology, although a much wider version would be even more appropriate for the tasks awaiting heritage carers, specially in developing countries. Some new museological approach, which I like to call heritology<sup>13</sup> does bear universal applicability: it goes for all that curators should be creative necessarily and artlike communicators<sup>14</sup>, and that they should transform from mere carers to sharers<sup>15</sup> - these transformations are most urgent matters in developing world. This "religio curatoris", some uniting philosophy of heritage is very much transnational and transcultural, but it is phenomenological in approach and should be of great help to all in the need of effective museum. That reformed science, some new *lokayata* may be called museology, provided that the content is redefined completely. It can only be phenomenon centred (i.e. heritage) which certainly implies much wider concern than the one possible only through museums. The Museology, therefore, is not a science of museums just as clearly as "Moby Dick" is not a manual on whaling. This new theory is, by its character, counteractive, process & life oriented, creative and socially minded. I would define it, firstly, as information science<sup>16</sup>, and then as a cybernetical philosophy of heritage. Consequently - as the concept of museum institution is necessarily more blurred than ever - museum is any creative effort of cybernetical action on the basis of the complex experience of heritage. Good definitions should be like good laws: short and allowing enough space for the practice of freedom and the requirements of life.

In this optic, the international boom of (all sorts) of museums is actually the appearance of the new industry of heritage engineering. Some of the ambitions that won themselves a wide public support do not care about the dignity of a traditional museum concept that they are supposed to follow. And yet the results are there, formed and realized around obviously respectable needs.

In these previous pages I have tried to suggest that problems of developing countries, or generally speaking, their specificity, requires autochthonous response even in the area of museums. Numerous problems, of which I have mentioned but a few, require wise solutions adjusted to their very nature. This fragile world, that the future of Planet depends so much upon, needs self respect and dignity and - development. All that one needs, be it a nation or a person, is too readily offered in this frenzy vanity fair of our world: solutions usually foreign to the original context and too dangerous by the implications. Combative museums, based strongly upon the identity of its users and engaged in development seems to be somewhat ugly creature when compared to its glass and marble, airconditioned, high-spirited contemplation museum, where the rich can afford it. Due to the variety of circumstances the gap between the rich and poor is even widening which creates a need for quite an emergen-cy call. So, let it be allowed to me, specially at this occasion, use again the words of Nehru: "I want work and work and work. I want achievement. I want men who work like crusaders. I want men who are going to fight for what they think is right, and not submit humbly to wrong. I want you to do big things. I want you to build up India." Could this inspire museum people (as they are the most important part of any action), and would it be possible to have museums & heritage recognized as the basis of any development?

Any speculation should have a point of departure in the analysis of practice, but should finally return to it with some responses or proposals. On the other hand, although I have tried to do my best, I am aware that I dispose only with bits of truth. My knowledge of India is far from sufficient, but nevertheless, advocating an active museum I should stand for an active museological thinking. We all need a plan of action, a strategy to follow<sup>17</sup>, and on feels an obliging urge to take a risk of contributing:

From some European examples I do think it would be possible to influence foreign cultural centres

to start building their prestigious image by helping indigenous, Indian culture to live and develop further.

Museum or heritage centre with a nation-wide network should be created to serve as a basis of regular and effective action. The project should redefine professional training, should contain maybe an initiative to found a museological institute, should define all actions of some professional common denominator value (International Museum day, museological publications etc.).

There should be an annual exhibition of museum publications serving as a precious occasion to evaluate it and also to demonstrate to others, outside of museum world, that museums are important publishers. As experience shows in Yugoslavia, the implications or effects are numerous.

There is indispensable need for issuing a special law for defining museums and their role in the society - their functioning, responsibilities, ways of institutional functioning etc., in the compliance with law upon the entire heritage care. It should establish museums as independent institutions under the direction of a special governmental body.

Basic manuals upon the most recent experiences of innovative quality should be published and translated into national languages to facilitate implementation.

Creation of centralized, temporary storages as a part of heritage preservation service, should be initiated.

Creation of some "flying heritage care service", able to react quickly and professionally, upon the spot and applying variety of skills and strategies.

Creation of standardized training units: theory - research - conservation - documentation - communication, should be undertaken.

Elaboration of a project of classification and documentation of museum objects as a preparatory phase for a national information system within the museum area.

Lounging of a major national project of elaborated network of heritage care in India; a similar project concentrated only upon museums together with some study of future of museum service in India.

Issuing a major national document & event, something like all Indian convention on the future of heritage "Indian heritage in the 21st century".

Creation of the "Indian National Traveling Exhibition Service" - an agency that would cover by its high standardized activity those blank areas out of the reach of any regular action. Well conceived, this agency could produce exceptional effects...

There should be a study and then a national project of a network of "total heritage units" or "heritage communication and local development centres"<sup>19</sup>.

A festival of national importance, as a kind of para-museal action: "All India festival of living traditions". It would give the necessary importance to local traditions and would encourage all those protagonists of them that find it difficult to fight back media imports etc.

There should be created a non-political, heritage based, socially, culturally and nationally minded *league* of the young, ambitious intellectuals - a movement "Hearts for India" with prestige and recognition for all who have learned "to step down". The more wisdom we manage to induce into the younger generations, the more prosperous the future of the country will be.

Notes:

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10. See note 4.
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12. Harrison, Molly. 1959. Education in Museums. The organization of museums: practical advice. *Museums and Monuments Series*, IX, p. 92. Unesco, Paris.
13. Šola, Tomislav. 1987. Introductory lecture to the international symposium "National documentation centres - corner stones of international network" (chapter: An institution to be), *Riksställningar*, Sept. 1987. Stockholm, Sweden.
14. The term was first proposed in 1982 (ICOFOFOM, Paris) and had provocative quality. In some papers that followed, I have tried to give it some further arguments.
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16. Kavanagh, Gaynor. 1988. International symposium "What is Museology" in Umeå Universitet 12.-14. April 1988. Umeå, Sweden.
17. Maroevic Ivo. 1984. The subject of Museology within the frame of Information Sciences. *Informatica Museologica*, No. 1-3, 1984. Zagreb.
18. The working group upon cultural policy and museums, within the frame of ICOFOFOM's international symposium "Museology and developing countries", 1988, Varanasi, has accomplished a usable set of conclusions and recommendations that should be further discussed and applied in India.
19. From the projects of "Synthesis - cultural engineering", Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

## 5. Science And Technology Museums

The new theory and communication technologies within the context of the European idea

Meetings of museum professionals are like religious gatherings. Museum people usually exchange their "liturgical" experiences – in short, how to pray and praise their God. But, there is usually no mention of theology and the god himself remains some loose notion; it used to be a museum object, and then reformists proclaimed it to be our public. But parallelly to that, many among us (afraid of excommunication) cherish their fundamentalist conviction in which the only true god is their proper academic discipline. As for the public, it is hoped that this authoritarian crowd will always find the uncomprehensible latin or liturgic slaviv a part of their existential masochism. But that, indeed, does not excuse our profession. We are there to know better. Admitting my own heresy I would claim that our true god is the total, collective experience, that our religion is heritology (some cybernetic philosophy of heritage), and our epiphanical message is (simply) wisdom – for the sake of public. Everything else is the question of method, of the liturgy. So, what is our mission? – To make people wiser by broadening their time and space perspectives; to make life better by creating new sensibility of the total environment; to generate responsibility in people by placing them into the universal chain of unavoidable causalities. Taken too educationally, as it was the case in the last hundred years, this complexity is regarded as a mere transfer of the socially formed knowledge, i.e. education. Far too little to be the aim of our mission.

When faith is lost the mass becomes only a liturgy. When the professional philosophy is not there, science in museums turns into bureaucratic institutionalism: the content is lost in form. This lack will generate a permanent disorder in our ranks, be it an important segment of science and technology museums or museums in general. Through the theory which is analytical and speculative layer of our professionalism we shall be able to employ ourselves in the right tasks and proper priorities. Science and technology museums specially have a responsibility to help towards the balance between our civilization and our culture, between pragmatism on one side and the wisdom on the other – between forces of change and the forces of adaptation. Always striving for the (unattainable) harmony "the limping cultural sector" (Harold Rosenberg) has to catch up with technology and keep pace with it – which has been a growing defect of our civilization for the last three to four centuries.

Industrial revolution was the point in our historical time when the Museum Big Bang blasted – it still radiates enormous energy which multiplies museums, further and further through the different spheres of our social space. The sphere where it started from was formed by historic cultures, by the brave, conquerous world of rationalist and Cartesian philosophy. Pushed by the primary impulse, our museums find themselves now in the world of totally different logic. In the "Third wave civilization" (A. Toffler), the one of our time, we live our history as present has disappeared and past became separated from the future only by a fast moving thin red line...Once fatally released, the ugly giant by the name of Change (we used to call it progress, didn't we?) endangers increasingly every identity, be it nature or culture. So far, science and technology museum people have been analysing the world, whereas the idea of the new role of the museum institution is how to manage the change, how to take command of our "space ship Earth" (B. Fuller) back into the hands of common reason.

The third wave civilization has to have its third wave museums: the history of those started almost two decades ago in Le Creusot. What began as a strive for a social relevance has now become a request for a complex metanoia, rethinking of museums. They obviously make sense only if serving the vital forces of life itself – they start from it and end in it. Once the task becomes

obvious enough, all divisions and formalities count for much less; all that really matters is efficacy and high performance. The Social Intelligence, a relatively new field in the Information sciences, is hardly at all concerned with our institutional differences, and our attachment to the originality of museum objects is to them a mere romantic myth (rightly so, if I may add). The logic of informatics has arrived. It implies a new synergy of media, it means a new synthesis of knowledge, and it will eventually cause the great convergence of heritage concerned institutions.

Cooperation of museums, and that goes for their entire institutional configuration, had traditionally a symbolic value of professional brotherhood, but now it has to become a quality in its own right. Obviously, an action towards the efficiency but also, one feels tempted to say, towards their institutional survival. Yet almost unexploited reserves of powerful messages, of forgotten wisdom are hidden in the entire sector. They can be activated and revealed through the cumulative institutional functioning. Multidisciplinary, transinstitutional and transsectorial logic of informatics ignores the rationalist taxonomy and the institutional division of competencies. As we are heading towards the realization of Malraux' and McLuhan's visions, as our future takes the first contours of the total museum, we discover our inability to adjust to these developments. The recent application pilot project (within the framework of an European Museum Network), DISCOVERY, will show how unadaptable we are. Those involved came to know museum as a rather clumsy and reluctant partner – quite an ominous sign for our future. Through the mentioned project museums entered symbolically the European programme RACE, but what about others like COMETT, ESPRIT and FAST?

Faced with the swiftness of the process of the informatic society museums should contemplate their "vulnerability": the institutional tradition of some two odd centuries does not suggest a fully and definitely formed profession. Museums are giving a false impression of having accomplished their final stage of development. Two or three hundred new museums a year in the Western Europe may be taken only as a neurotic reaction of the endangered species. Traditional profession is overreacting to the call for change sometimes by changing that which should be a protected value, or by the resistance to the changes where they are necessary. The real sin, however, is when they allow adjust themselves to the new era by appropriating the contemporary technological disguise. Some museums are born old. The expanding circle of institutions concerned with heritage protection suggests some wider and higher level of resonances, a get-together that is only vaguely perceived but desperately needed.

The new cooperation of museums that will be encouraged through the advanced technologies brings a doubled effect: better institutional performance and a push towards the future. These two, taken together, will decisively contribute to the quality of their mission. Some dozen years ago telematics was rightly seen as a new battlefield, an issue for growing concern in national policies, and it was more than logical to expect that museums will be "drafted" sooner or later. The society of the total information brings, unlike previewed, the consequence of the permanent and total information war, where existing means fighting. But, the hypermedia and telecom industry are neither our friends nor our enemies. If we cannot do without them, we better join them while we can still negotiate the terms so as to assure the fatal 51 % of conceptual shares. We can either be their resources or their partners. Knowing the difference will mean for museums deciding upon their professional destiny. But, to know the difference one has to have broad vision, self-assurance, uncorrupted (deinstitutionalized) mind and – responsibility – all that is product of a clear, coherent professional philosophy. There is nothing more practical than a good theory. All museums lack it equally, but after hundred years of trying to find it in Museology we should enlarge the ambition.

The new generations of trained curators are the only guarantee of our successful future. Equipped

with transferred experience of the profession, disposing with professional intelligence they will be able to handle any new situation and will be the masters of the applied art of heritage communication – new people for new medium. They will find it normal that an automobile museum employs as many art historians as it employs engineers. Working in a science and technology museum or centre will have to mean a creativity which erases the difference between culture and scientific culture. They will understand why Niels Bohr felt tempted to say: "When about atoms, the language can be used only the way it is used in poetry. The poet strives far less to define facts than to create images." It is like he was speaking about contemporary "blip culture". On the other hand – good science is always art and the good art is always a science.

The (otherwise) dangerous lagging of museums behind the advanced technologies and appropriate ways of reasoning explains why most of the experiments applicable to museums happen outside of them and often without them. The future professionals will creatively handle and use facilities, equipment and institutions themselves as the material of their complex, composite para-artistic medium. The logic of their art is that of cybernetics and informatics and necessarily transdisciplinary, transinstitutional, transsectorial and transnational. We are all entering the era of synthesis.

Within the need of professional organizing, one level and distinctive identity is represented by science and technology museums and/or centres. Today's Europe is inspiring and ready frame for it. So, let us see what might be done:

- European Association for Scientific and Technological Heritage (EASTH). The membership should not be limited only to the museum institution.
- A powerful telematic network of science and technology museums, centres and collections on the level of Europe.
- European Science and Technology Travelling Exhibition Service (ESTTES). It should function as a programme assistance, spreading the know-how and serving the "white areas" as a regular help etc.
- European Fair of Scientific and Technological Heritage. It should function as the sectorial public relation event, as a place of meeting and entertainment, and it should accept all the interested parties.
- Network of the Science and Technology Communication Units (STCU). It should be formed out of standardized, high quality and easy to operate units. They may be named "Keeping you informed" (On vous tient au courant) or any other obvious way. The role would be to offer the updated, digested, attractive and contextualized information upon the most recent phenomena or developments important in some actual dilemma. These standardized units should be supplied with exhibits by some regional centres, but each installation should have its local accompanying part based upon specific problems, local know-how or traditions.
- The scheme of the regular technical, scientific or managerial assistance.
- International company in charge of the marketing of the products offered by institutions related to the science and technology. The company of this kind may have non-profit status when related to the Association.

The former area was marked by an effort of exchange, but the approaching one will have to bring the quality of "working together". This latter spares the effort and money while doubling the effects. By understanding the state of the profession and the capacity of the new technologies we are ready for this development. After the troublesome period of the ideological aventure the lost sons of Europe are returning home. They will have to be helped if we wish for a successful family

life. Financial component is more a question of technique than contents.

Zagreb, June 1990

## 6. Regional Museums in a Multi-ethnic Society

The regional museum is a basic breed of a true museum. Its existence is, by any standard or reason, a logical fact. This is not, however, the case with most museums. Quite a few of them are either the consequence of a certain particular interest of a collector, or any other specifically qualified founder. The regional museum is modern by its very nature. The calls for an integrated, holistic approach or totality in its interests is less urgent for them, as they cannot fail to be complex. It has an obvious responsibility, unlike an art museum or a museum of locks and keys, for instance. Such a museum has a more logical aim of criticism as it is expected to be involved in the life of the community. The impracticability of rigid division of scientific divisions is illustrated very clearly in this type of museum.

Any definition of a region, except the administrative one, implies the indefiniteness, extent and lack of obvious boundaries. I prefer the original reasons for founding the regional museums to the one that suggests division and competence over certain administrative territory. I am afraid that most of the regional museums do not necessarily behave according to the general understanding of what a region is. Administrative limits are not always the ones that correspond to the geographical limits of a certain identity.

By the beginning of this century we have had the "heimat museum" and the "musee de territoire" in German and French speaking Europe respectively, whereas, Great Britain claimed the term "regional museum". Identity in France is a question of national strategy, and this is why the frustration with the traditional regional museums was rationalized there earlier and better than elsewhere. Fifty years ago they had a concept of "musées de thèmes et des pays" and "musée de synthèse" and later on "musée d'identité". By the end of the Sixties it was "musée de l'environnement" and at the beginning of the Seventies there was the new term, "ecomuseums". From all three sides we have had claims that "ecomuseum" is an unnecessary, preposterous invention, trying to give a common name to all the differently named regional museums. Of course, the ecomuseum concept existed before it was baptized. But this has always been the case with any concept before synthesis occurs and the official name is given to it: there were Columbuses before the one with glory, there were Copernickuses before the Earth was put officially where it belong, ads there were Darwins before the book "The Origins of Species" changed the world. As a cooperative venture, an institution belonging equally to the local population and to the curators, – the ecomuseum is certainly a regional museum, but the correct one by definition, the programme can be seen from the title. The ecomuseum concept is thus a challenge to traditionalism of all museums, but especially to regional museums. Taken as a philosophy and as an approach, this concept is not a model, either as a type of an institution or as a standardized practice in it. It is a constant call for the unceasing effort to detinstitutionalise the museum, a call for breaking down its boundaries and limits in order to best serve the community.

### The Multi-ethnic Society

But a community is many things. The community is not a synonym for the public. A community is predominantly non-public. It is composed of a divergent variety of interests and levels, and maybe even different ethnicities. In the narrower sense of the term, we deal with the situation of multi-culturalism. Almost any society is and always has been multi-ethnic and therefore (although not only because of it) multicultural. As in the case of ecomuseums, we discover what was there all the time and yet it is a discovery as it enters our scope of practical concern. We become officially

aware of our debt towards the integral society, not only its dominant part, be it by majority or by power. One almost feels tempted to dismiss the theme as spending time on the obvious. Yet, the practice is so restrained by servility and numerous other inadequacies and inaptitudes of museums that what is obvious stays still an ideal objective. Professional speculation (if one fatally rejects the need for a professional philosophy, be it museology or something else) tells us that the practice is not an unifying factor of the world's museum scene. Whatever is the practice and cultural background of museums in the Western, developed world, it takes on an entirely different form in Asia and Africa, to take two extreme examples. There is already much diversification in Europe. There's no way to compare the post-historic society, where ethnicity means local tradition expressed on the occasion of annual feasts, and society still under the strain of its historic processes. Ethnic culture there may have a political aspiration and we may easily be confronted with the birth of nations, as in the geologically unstable zones where a new island may rise above the surface of the sea. Museums there sink into the boiling chaos, as they can exist only as signs and consequences of stability and peace. Even if it exists in the zone of relative stability, a museum can hardly treat multiculturalism except from the point of ethnocentrism. Sooner or later it will split into separate museums. This shows an alarming mobility of the museum to exert any usable contribution towards stability and co-existence of diversity where the process is not yet politically defined. I am afraid that ethnocentrism is very much the form of multi-culturalism explained or presented in many western museums themselves: one shows the variety only to demonstrate dominance and superiority. Maybe we should talk about a multi-culturalist cure for our present museums, while understanding that it remains an idealist objective. As a whole, museums are "consecutive" mechanisms of society. They only follow or culturally legalize what is already decided or expected. They are neither pro-active nor counteractive when, by their analysis, the need commands such an action. What is more, they do not possess such an analysis nor the ability to do it, as most of them are not synchronous with their time. When feeling guilty, they always have scientific interest as an excuse to miss points of reference. Politicians or clergymen can offer excuses to another nation for the injustice and evil done by their predecessors, but I cannot think of any museum accompanying these gestures by changes in their permanent exhibitions or even in contemporary ones, let alone preceding such a political action by theirs.

Integral in its approach by definition, a regional museum is dramatically sensible to these difficulties. It is apt to suffer more than any other museum the unpreparedness of the museum profession to face contemporary challenges. As with any other museum, a regional museum is rarely able or willing to include political judgment in its rules of selection and in the planning process. In the case of the museum, it is felt that a political judgment should also be political justice as scientific ethics would obviously command. The easy way out is to give an image of a multi-ethnic approach, to include multiculturalism on declarative level and continue the old practice. It is not hard to imagine that this may be worse in the end than just ignoring ethnic variety.

#### The constant need for re-definition

the eco-museum concept was that call. Nothing else. It is not science but your user that you serve. As society changes dramatically, so should its museums: it has to respond to changing needs. With the so-called privatization of museums we started to talk the language of business. "Value for money" is the paradigm we hear more and more. We are threatened daily by such inventions as "performance indicators". The big idea is that society, through its representative bodies (that usually like to give an image of saving taxpayers' money) check our effectiveness in order to punish us by spending still less on whatever we do. Some of this pressure is coming almost too late, as we already have a rapidly expanding heritage industry. When trying hard, we have pretended to

be entertaining in our scientific discourse, whereas they successfully give the impression of being scientific in the amusement they offer.

I doubt if any museum, be it regional or specialized, could be as entertaining, but we could put forward a good case for being indispensable. Multi-ethnicity is the hardest problem and therefore a long term objective. But the system we talk about is the same: indicate a need in your community (-ies) and fulfil it! If it is an inadequate level of tolerance, do your best, by drawing on past experience to propose sensible solutions. A regional museum is needed when it is seen as an active participant of the community. I doubt if a regional museum or any other in fact is there to offer final truths. Its insight in to the wide and profound quality of certain problems, and its ability to present the problem in the form of an information space are unique tools. Its ability to bring about "real" testimonies in the form of three-dimensional objects is the outer shape of the "museum fidelity" so dependent upon what we like to believe is objective science. Therefore, a regional museum is an ideal tool of democratic insight and the basis for an exchange of arguments. It should therefore be seen by all as a mechanism of social transparency, a meeting point and a forum. An auditorium in a regional museum should be constantly in use as an alternative local assembly, not merely offering lectures upon Mondrian to a few bored snobs, before being sure that all the ugliness and beauty of the region is being presented and discussed. Frustration, coming from an ethnic group or any other group, should be treated there. I do not imagine that a regional museum, poor almost by definition, could be covering everything concerning the life of its community. Yet, the relevance and prestige thus created usually pay off and are readily assisted. They build up a moral argument which makes any claim for finances sound like a rightful request and not humble begging. The curator of a regional museum might finally enjoy the status of a precious troublemaker or troubleshooter, depending on which way his actions help more.

Constant re-definition is implied in this willingness of the authorities to encourage self-reliance of museums. The new contract they offer is a delicate matter which requires a mature profession as a partner. Once functioning, it may mean a final introduction to the autonomy of museums. This would mean less security but wider possibilities for independent action. Mentally, it equally implies that museums could finally be counteractive mechanisms of society, aiming their actions towards corrective effects in their respective region and society. The seemingly vague concept behind it is the balanced, sustainable development of society in all its facets of living. The museum therefore appears as a regulative mechanism of the inevitable processes of change in which identity is an unstable, fragile coherence dependent upon the catalyst and corrective action.

#### Case study: Yugoslavia

A country composed of six republics, five nations, four languages, three religions, two ways of writing and one party was not likely to survive. After the Second World War, the Party declared that the national question of former Yugoslavia had been solved. The new Yugoslavia was a sealed pot with a steady fire under it. Serbia, as the majoritary nation, tolerated much of the doctrine of the proletarian internationalism and South-Slav integralism as it also assured its domination. The first outburst of nationalism at the beginning of the Seventies was destroyed by force: the leaking pot was sealed again. The second one brought the bloodiest war in the recent European history, started by the frustrated dominant political and cultural identity and accepted and assisted by others who were also frustrated. The Party was Stalin's disciple: it prevented all the nations in Yugoslavia from having their national museums of culture and history. What was there were some surviving structures of the pre-war period with no scope for development and growth. The same was true of the regional museums: any national dimension except ethnography was "mal vue", badly regarded

by the party officials. So, museums could neither safeguard nor promote and assist what was the substance of the national being. The need was there, but they were at first prevented and then unable to respond to it. This was a lack of quality input, scientifically supported (as it should be in museums) and as a result the national myth was growing into a wild, distorted and manipulated jungle. On the contrary, there was one category of museums (scattered all over the country), created by the Party that enjoyed its lavish support: museums of the Revolution. Using objects and documentary material, as well as many photos and texts, all of them taught the story of liberating the country from the German occupation and local fascists, and of bloody inter-national conflict. Upon this truth, badly presented though, another thesis was proposed: all this was possible because the Savior Party knew the prudence of leading all successfully out of the chaos. This was not altogether wrong either, at least for the war years, but the way was fatal: these museums generated steadily highpitched hatred against Germans and the national warring parties. The hatred was good to have: it made the Party's merits more evident and it kept enemies alive - still another reason to have the protective Party around. We all know that museums are mechanisms of continuity, and they have to be that way, except when they are concerned with wars, battles and revolutions. Then their continuity becomes counterproductive. Generating hatred brings evil grapes of intolerance and revenge. So, some conclusions become possible: the multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism, the very substance of Yugoslavia, was doublecrossed by the Party's melting pot project, by the lack of identity protection and by the generation of conflicting feelings.

Museums did absolutely nothing to clear up the heated medieval campaign of "blut und boden" that was building up the war atmosphere. Once the war started, another confirmation of the inherent importance of museums came about when museums and monuments were bombed: they were attacked as alter ego of identity itself, Dubrovnik being an example which no literature on subject will omit. Again, museums would only show the amount of the aggression, avoiding any tone that could soften the rights and arguments as any side would prefer them. It is not the objective of this analysis to measure the sins of warring parties as if they resemble any crime: always look for those with motives and gains. Museums only follow obediently the wishes of their masters and try to serve them best.

### An intermediary conclusion

What does this example of Yugoslavia show that may concern our profession, be it on regional or national level? It shows clearly that museum provision must be based upon natural need and scientific corrective input and that it can, although not being decisive, either help or harm the life of the community in which it exists. It also demonstrates the fatal lack of autonomy towards political and economical forces which is seriously harming its future. This extreme situation in Europe makes it obvious that most other European museums suffer from the same insufficiency hidden in democratic disguise – an illusion possible when there is a prosperous peace. One should conclude, it seems, that museums are only meant for peace and affluence – which is sad and disappointing, especially if we count with some prosperity of our profession. Who needs a friend and partner who becomes useless in hard times? An academic question, indeed, if we never define our mission clearly. Defining the mission implies deciding who are our true masters, partners and who need our friendly care. It implies moral obligation, responsibility and the risk of counteraction. In this direction we might find the relevance we deserve as a powerful mechanism of wisdom. As for the true master, it can only be a community around us with all its given diversity. As a medium of metamorphosis museums should be able to turn this multicultural inconvenience into richness and advantage: an idealist goal but worth the effort.

## Defining the mission of regional museums

Any mission statement is a document of ethical commitment. Its usual form, if it exists, is thronged with big words and importance of understanding among people. A regional museum belongs to the entire community even when it is composed of many ethnic i.e. cultural entities. As any other well-understood museum would have it, good regional museums are striving to give an objective analysis of the community structure and its needs. This objective effort is also very much commanded by the scientific nature of museum endeavour. Any scientist, like any museum curator would know how difficult it is to maintain objectivity in the world defined by interests. And, as often happens, what causes the most pain rarely proves successful in practice. Few seem to appreciate this sharing which to them is a pale image of what they imagine as their own interest. Ethnicity and culture are both subjective categories by their very contents. They express themselves subjectively and like to feel (or like to be felt) unique. Every culture has enough reasons or motives to believe in its own ultimate uniqueness and therefore to have the natural right to be treated accordingly. There's an aura of exclusiveness around any specific culture which makes it subjective in all its ambitions. A culture shows a generous tolerance only if it feels overwhelmingly secure in its dominance. Sooner or later, depending upon the strength of the ethnicity involved, any distinctive culture will try to serve its particular interests by creating its own mechanisms of continuity and affirmation. The fact that this separation is more often than not inspired or led by political and economic forces, does not change much. It is no secret that museums are given full "autonomy" only when they fit the patterns of the governing forces of society.

There are two positions in the configuration of a multi-ethnic society in which the coexistence of cultures does not necessarily pose any inconvenience. One is rural, where cultures are predominantly expressed as living folklore. Museums there may propose a further insight into the still-practised culture, but its identity stays vital by its own force. The other is the urban situation in big cities, where multi-culturalism is a fact of living; the unifying factor there is international culture, because the majority of population sees its own culture(s) as belonging to the past. They become an art form, detached from the everyday life, in which all the members of the community dress, behave and speak the same way.

Neither of these extreme positions (certainly oversimplified themselves) corresponds to the typical situation of regional museums. When they deal with living ambitions and frustrations of an endangered ethnic group and its culture, they have to take on the rôle of a moderator and challenge unrealistic, improper claims by corrective input. They should not give the last word, but should widen the context and insight to enable visitors to form their own opinions. The permanent exhibition is the public mission statement of the museum. It can be further clarified and distinguished by temporary actions whose best objective is to fulfil a specific needs.

A museum is relevant and estimated in direct proportion to its contribution to the protection of diminishing values. It is not as simple as researching these values and then presenting them. That is the old, unsuccessful pattern. It must be able to pump them back into the body of culture, refreshed in their self-consciousness and reinforced in their ability of autonomous action. This is why a traditional museum can only be a starting point of the heritage action, a reactor to the process of perpetuation of culture(s). Anything a museum does, no matter how far it may be, both physically and conceptually, from its storage and its glass cases, is justified, provided it gives life back to what would otherwise be degenerating. This mission is very different from the traditional one which implied "Medusa's touch", freezing everything the museum laid its curatorial hands on. Such a museum does not preserve culture to be cloned in a laboratory but it keeps alive its inspiration and

vital energy, its ability to develop and change by itself and in its own right. Once they understand this, museum curators need academic knowledge, vocational zest, talent and imagination to move in the right direction. The harsh reality is that most of us use only our academic knowledge, but that being only a quarter of what is needed makes us a feeble partner in the community and a weak adversary in fighting for our mission. Thus it might easily be that we lack more than we like to admit when trying to fulfil our role: a strong profession (able to fight efficiently for its status and the importance of its mission), and a convincing product (that would have higher standing on the list of priorities of a profit-driven society). The recent invention of the sustainable development paradigm (where we are indispensable) gives some hope that others could push us towards accomplishing our mission.

### Some concluding advice

The ideal of museums must be an unobtrusive, discreet omnipresence. But the institutional logic of museums would like it to be different, since any institution likes to show off with grandeur and sumptuousness. No doubt such museums that underline, even by their physical appearance, the prestige and importance of the identity they present will exist as museums are all too often seen as the symbols of frivolous ambition and vanity. The profession is then housed in those palaces to worship the installed myth. Built like cathedrals, these splendid museums are evidence that their institutionalism is supported and their religion cherished, at least by those who distribute public money. The public itself, and the museums' potential users are themselves conditioned to accept the public prestige of the reigning powers. They feel they can share its importance. But as in religion, the real faith can be practiced in cathedrals too. Our profession, as far as it can influence cultural politics, should, however, build chapels and shrines wherever possible, not to raise the importance of religion, but to announce the presence of the Identity and help it survive. And even then, one has to know that Identity is not in a museum, just as God does not live in a church.

After this period of ascent of nationalism, when we can expect the last wave of national museums to be created or renewed, people will turn more and more to their regional values. A Region will be the *donjon*, the last tower of the cultural ramparts where the Identity is defended. There, the regional museum must be the physical centre of heritage action and the departing point of a defence strategy, i.e. a centre of a network of museum outposts. This way it will acquire its natural place in the life of the community. It will acquire a new ability to reason on the level of common sense, to be able to talk to the people around, and be influenced by what it hears. Its true greatness will be confirmed in the faculty of covering or touching the extremes at the same time: that of scientific relevance and that of a banality of everyday living. One of the problems of any modern society is the need for justice in co-existence of different ethnic groups and their cultural expressions. A regional museum will again be the basic level at which to treat the problem and itself a measure of the progress we make.

### III MUSEUMS AND THE USERS

1. Museums in the context of cultural and social evolution
2. Museum education – museological treatment of identity
3. From education to communication
4. Communication of museums
5. Educational role of art museums
6. Museums and the needs of people
7. From interpretation to communication

## 1. Museums in the context of cultural and social evolution

One of the greatest museologist, Hugues de Varine, says that culture is "l'ensemble des solutions trouvées par l'homme et par le groupe aux problèmes qui leur sont posés par leur environnement naturel et social" (the ensemble of the solutions that a man and a group have found to the problems posed to them by their natural and social environment). Culture is, indeed, a spiritual and practical totality that is manifested through collective sensitivity, rhythm, style and life values - through specific forms of expression and behaviour. (Social evolution, on the other hand, is just a fancy way to speak about the development of a society. Evolution implies change and change is necessarily development.) Widely applied as a term, society is another name for the whole complex of economical and human relations on the level of a certain community that defines the relation of people towards nature and their interrelations within the production process. It would not be wrong, finally, to claim that culture and society suggest the human totality that we may wish to see as the vast area of museum performance. That very totality is given as a "context" to an institution that we still call museum, whatever that may mean nowadays. This totality may well mean - identity. Again, talking about museums, one necessarily speaks about their objectives. So one should be honest to pose oneself some further questions: What are the needs that museums are supposed to fulfil when talking about development? Why is it that these tasks are not performed satisfactorily? Who is indeed in charge or able to undertake such tasks? How should these tasks be done? What is the new professional that forms the basis of this reaction? What is his philosophy that makes these performances logical and lasting?

In present world of ours the only constant is – change. What a Belgian sociologist Henri Jaune called "la société en changement" speaking about the contemporary society, we now see described, with some added evaluation, as The Era of Great Anxiety<sup>1</sup>, Third Wave civilization<sup>2</sup>, or some other terms that witness the neurotic state of contemporary societies. As the mankind is approaching its maturity (which it may not reach, one may suspect), we feel things happen in the manner of long, everlasting explosion, another Big Bang. Like in a puberty, our civilization suffers from the identity crisis. The collective mind is not able to follow the changes due to our physical growth nor control the acquired power. The number of museums and curators is maybe getting close to the number of churches and their priests - a remarkable success of an institution, specially if one bears in mind that the entire history of a modern museum institution (including its slow beginnings) took, only in rare centres of prosperity, hardly two hundred years. Like with temples, there is but a certain vision of survival behind it – due to the fear of disappearance of what we regard as essential us. Like with the schools, there is in them this willingness to continue and perpetuate what has been conquered in the name of reason. Our criteria are changed, but the fear and insecurity are the same. We feel that FURTHER (in distances and speed) and MORE (in quantities and possessions) need their counterpart in BETTER (in quality, satisfaction, understanding, peace, security).

Speaking about the tasks of cultural sector, Roland Barthes says in one interview: "En ce qui me concerne, j'assignerais pour tâche principale aux sciences humaines et sociales, d'écouter l'imaginaire de la société. Nos sociétés développées ne sont plus en effet des sociétés de besoin mais des sociétés du désir, donc de l'imaginaire." ("I would say that the main task of human and natural sciences is to listen to the imaginary of the society. Our developed societies are no longer societies of needs but of desires, thus of the imaginary.")<sup>3</sup> Whether he had museums on his mind or not would change little as the task applies well to what present museums are encountered with. Their task is hardly realized in collecting, research and

presentation. Neither education in museums responds closely to their role. Object centered museums are not the probable destiny of the museum idea. Stanislas Adotevi puts it so clearly: "Museum objects never represent but tangible, palpable and material manifestations of the spiritual and ethical existence of man; of man in his environment, his traditions, his life – how he transformed the material, adopted and assimilated exterior influences, how finally he assumed his culture, in fact how he assumed his development."<sup>4</sup> There one finds that possibility of a passage from cultural to economical which is so important in the life. In fact, that has been the characteristic of museum development ever since the beginning, but obvious only now through the theory and practice of ecomuseums or, nowadays, even in the cultural policies of some countries.

What should be done?

The goals should be set up very high. The gurus of our civilization and culture already said everything necessary long ago. Re-inventing it is a matter of adjusting old truths to changing circumstances. It is only the matter of repeating it and explaining it until it becomes accepted wisdom. Museums are a great tool and handy invention in this respect. Fromm taught us about the fundamental issue of eternal dilemma: to possess or to be. Many, like René Maheu say: "Il ne s'agit pas d'avoir plus mais d'être plus" ("It is not a matter of having more but of being more").<sup>5</sup> Quite a task, if you translate it into everyday life and apply it to making choices in development. One has to understand that museums may form part of the core of the action, but they are far from being the only in charge. Social evolution is a process towards the balance of a society, towards democratic rule in which neither elite would nor the majority would impose, towards social organization based upon value judgements and ethical choice. As a possible "neutral" ground, museums can provide democratic insight needed for any founded discussion. It can give opportunity for transparency of decision making and give space and material necessary for contemplation.

What we talk about is evidently a complex situation in which all good ideas about our survival have to be founded upon the wide democratic support and approval. Museums happen to be the best version of our civilization's "biblia pauperum", understandable and legible to all. They are able to use the subtle set of techniques to gain attention and raise interest for their messages. Museums are a theater, a scientifically based theater. That mechanism of transcendence, of metaphor, of illusion, of creative collage of syntagms, of obvious experiences, is rather unique means for specific purposes and yet unexploited to its full capacity.

The task of museums is to obtain continuation of identities, to assure continuity of specificities, to preserve originalities, but not in the way to petrify them, to freeze them in opposition to the present and future. Curiously, museums did freeze the cultures they are in charge of, denying them thus the right of changing, of developing. Of course, they prevented nothing but only excluded themselves from influencing this development in a creative way. The subtlety of their task is contained in ability to do it being there firmly, acting creatively and yet not interfering into the deeper layers of an indigenous, autochthonic impulses of the society. Museums do not create, or generate culture; they neither establish development policies. They are a democratic tool of self-reflection and auto-analysis enabling thus their proper community to react and move maturely. – Knowledge, sensibility, awareness of its proper dimensions in time and space of its real (yet mirrored) image help a community to be creative and to be its proper self (this latter being the *conditio sine qua non* for any true creativity).

Therefore, the museum programmes must be created according to the needs and interests of their actual and potential users. This condition of their activity implies that they are, by the consequence, charged to know, in subtleties and shades of qualities, their proper community – its ambitions, its hidden potentials, its faults and false pretensions. So, museum is necessarily more than estheticized repository of valuables and achievements of that community.

Paradoxically, it is mostly created out of prestigious, power supporting motives that put strain upon community and manipulate its identity. They, however, help to bring more tourists both domestic and foreign who are unaware of whatever the local identity is, so they spend money in hotels, shops and restaurants. To provoke these effects, only rarely an exceptional collection could be enough. So museums are both, encouraged and pushed towards self supportive activities. This profit orientation of museums may succeed quite well, though, and be productive in the short run. This entrepreneurial orientation, which forgets any other task, agrees perfectly well with the conquerous and possessive nature of Western civilization. Besides, it may even become a winning model for daily practices, which however wrong could survive for quite a long time and, eventually, spoil the chances of accomplishing the true role.

In short, museums have to be useful so as to have a solid basis for any marketing effort, but "they fail to seize the opportunity to present to visitors something of value in terms of their own existence"<sup>6</sup>. Film is a proclaimed art medium, but it has taken up themes, on all levels of reception, about the problems of the world around us: from endangered animals to mafia or dictatorships. Although film industry has no obligation to science, the truth is not necessarily harmed. Documentary film possesses directness of reporting, and courage in the evaluation of present, which often bear some risks and yet the dignity of medium does not suffer.

Why the role is not performed?

Culturological purism and somewhat false scrupulosity place museums automatically outside of the circle of attractive, immediately useful information. The claim is that others should do it anyhow (which is partly true), but museums can add relevance and in many cases do it better way. So, they find themselves "in the classic posture of literary man to 'point with pride and view with alarm' while scrupulously ignoring what's going on"<sup>7</sup>. Entire museum sector, not evenly though, suffers from autistic detachment from the outside, everyday world, which is a state of institutional neurosis. Some authors<sup>8</sup> claim that the great splitting paradigm which confronted science and philosophy, materialism and idealism, fact and value, started already in the 18th century, and that is the time when the concept of modern, traditional museum institution has been founded. Only the loose relativism of the last few decennies suggested that museums cannot stand for the entire richness of the world, that objectiveness and scientific perfection (though being honorable aims) are mere wishful thinking.

Enormous collections are detached from the sources, from their origins and rarely emit a feedback that would keep the source flow. Once the collection is established and regarded as complete it is somehow supposed that it can perfectly substitute the life it derives from. But, regardless of its nature, it is rarely anything but a skeleton of it, however well cleaned and cared for. With the widened perspectives of what is important in this environment of ours we see that all those vast collections are only scattered particles of the sinking Past that are washed ashore. From these pieces Museums are trying to reconstruct the vessel, an activity foolish in many respects: firstly because the task is impossible, and finally because it is not

necessary. It is the problem of the Lewis Carroll's map which is, in order to be perfect, conceived as mile to mile in measures.<sup>9</sup> That caricatured image of museum mission as it is understood by the majority of museum curators and their bosses, reveals that museums subdued themselves to some fatal mistakes: passeism (as they generate past instead of serving the present by the relevant past experience), bureaucratism (as they forget the objectives, taking the institution and what it does to research and accumulate as final goal) and monetarisation (as they are firmly integrated into the value systems of our present societies which are run by ruthless powers always translatable into the terms of money). In the nature of such deviation one can recognize the conformist formalism of finding the easiest solution: they treat the material side of their collections with greater care than the spiritual substance contained in them. By this our world demonstrates its immature fascination with material existence which, eventually, some may regard as the source of all our troubles. Nevertheless – that fascination in museums suggests that we are not evolved much further from pharaohs. Museums are there to obtain, to secure the eternity to us, but believing we can do it by preserving the corpses of people or of the objects is naïve and, once void of religious motives, rather foolish. Almost a form of insanity, speaking in rigid terms.

Do not be misled by the fact that rather traditional museums are growing in respectable numbers wherever there is enough ambition and enough money to erect the buildings. Not many are apt to know what a good museum should look like or do. Their growth in number is likely to be signaling a neurotic reaction of this world of ours to the dramatic problem of the constant identity loss.

A different museum can do it

Whoever claims that there are obsolete and irrelevant museums on one side and new effective museums on the other, is over-simplifying things. Besides, some traditional museums have become integral part of their socio-cultural environment and have become, consequently a constituent part of the related complex identity. On the other hand, by the ascent of some professional theory, we see nowadays a very developed vocabulary of all the interested parties. One of the syntagms of the kind is that whatever they do, it is an honest effort for the benefit of the future generations. That is usually a bureaucratic formula. They also formulate the final purpose of their presentation as *education*, but that is not a general medicine curing all the illnesses, as Bertrand Russell would put it.

The objective of museums and related institutions and actions is the creation of reliable and exhaustive databanks about the concerned identity, consisting of complex collection of documents. By the multidisciplinary research and attractive presentation a museum can hope to be able to create related awareness, to achieve sensibilization of its users, to help them know themselves and the environment in which they live. This, in its own turn, can serve as a basis for changed behaviour which is probably the final point of some hoped influence of museums. Museums are about life and make sense only if they serve life and vital forces of it. Therefore – although it may seem paradoxical – museums should serve the change and the process of adaptation to it, at the same time.

A different museum not only does its job differently but comes to life in a different way. There I would like to quote one of our colleagues who is successfully transferring the reformed professional theory into effective practice: "Une communauté (de Vercors, T.S) dans un moment de lucidité, fait appel à sa mémoire et entame une réflexion collective, qui retrouve

son histoire, reprend possession de son espace, tente de réanimer son agriculture, bref cherche à maîtriser de nouveau son développement" ("A community, in its lucid moment, appeals to its memory and commences a collective reflection; it recovers its history, regains the possession of its space, tries to reanimate the agriculture, in short, strives to master once again its proper development.)<sup>10</sup> There, obviously, the museum is not the matter of some conspicuous prestige followed and socialized by fiscal system and power holders of the community. It is a sort of heritage concerned museum congregationalism where "believers", the users, are decision makers in all the matters concerning the interpretation of their proper identity. Moreover, their museum becomes a tool of decision making on their future, and thus becomes a part of a democratic development strategy. This way a museum becomes a mechanism of hope and vitality; it may impose past to the present (as the latter consists of many presents) but it must, as the consequence, prefer future to the past. This is the substantial difference between an old and a "new" institution.

Although denied as a novelty in our civilization, the famous ecomuseum is a turning point in practice and in the relationship of practice and theory. Firstly it constituted a clear practical approach that became a recognizable pattern (although not a rule), and secondly it came to existence due to the theoretical effort. It demonstratively destroyed the usual notions of a museum: the reach, the ambition, the physical limits, the professional exclusivity, the place of the public, the ambitions, the ways of acting for and with the users, the management, the classification of museum objects, the place of the presentation, the conservation principles, the relation towards the present and future etc. And yet, it stayed a museum. It was counteractive creation and served well to correct the development of the heritage preservation idea (I do not say "of museum idea"). Some would talk of three phases of ecomuseum development and others of the four generations of them. – It seems to me that it only witnesses the integration of the idea into the vast heritage protection practice: the mission ecomuseums novelty is accomplished but having broken the new ground, its inspirative power will continue to emit the positive impulses upon museum world.

A different museum of today is many things at the same time: a temple of national/communal/group pride, a showroom of resources, of production of trade and services, a research centre upon identity and communication, a data bank of entire heritage and the orientation centre for it, a leisure centre, a source and coordination point of the entire heritage action. Speaking about ecomuseum Georges Henri Rivière calls it "...une institution polyphonique, carrefour de l'espace et ou temps" (a polyphonic institution, a crossing point of space and time).<sup>11</sup>

How to do it differently?

Museums are there because of the certain identity and, if correctly conceived, they grow out of it, they stem from it. Ecomuseums and related theory suggested that no model of a universally applicable museum will ever be possible. Further development of practice and new theoretical conclusions confirm it still better. Whereas the post-modern psychology admits any sort of eclecticism and introduces new tolerance (repulsive to any notion of revolutionary ruptures), we are able to defend the existence of traditional museums where they form a part of the certain identity. (They will face always the need of adjustments to the changing circumstances around them, and react to it.) What we are talking about is the practice of those newly created museums. The treason to the future and to the profession is committed in those cases when a new museum is created by the rules and procedures that are a century old. It does not change much if they are disguised by the heaps of the modern

display and presentation technology, with fully technologized shell, only to do the same old job with new means.<sup>12</sup>

In the time of synthesis, of synergetic action, in the situation when the boundaries among the sciences are again creatively blurred, museum ambition is becoming synoptic – wide in approach, global in ambition, wholistic in treatment. Museums are trying to be more democratic and easily comprehended and approached. Their older brothers suffered from the social inhibition, as they represented the symbols of somebody else's happiness, luxury, commodity, privilege and – culture. If helped by the educational system, which is the case, this glamorous conception can serve as an attractive identification, or as a way to create the most devoted snobs. In fact, by the tradition, education and media, the museum public may be so conditioned that it refuses to support any other conception except the traditional one. This, if connected with power holders may harm even a successful new practice.

In a reformed museum – which, one has to add, hardly supports generalizations – one finds the structure of time, space, mirror and territory. It becomes a medium of expression of the related community, a place of insight and a catalyst of common agreement: it expresses the needs and aspirations but does not create in the sense of taking over the job of either other institutions or the society itself. It is a democratic tool of scientifically supported collective reflection. Such a museum can take part in urban planning – protection of heritage, re-use of old buildings, tourist capacities and organization of living. It can raise the standard of apprehension of plastic arts influencing the public choice, organize ways of involving the population to participate in artistic creation, and help the integration of art and artists into the economic life of the community; it can influence the quality of industrial products also through the introduction of the themes on heritage, find out and protect techniques and local "know-how" to enrich the living, and discover the economic relevance of these activities. It can serve as a means of expression to local groups or minorities, etc. An active museum of the kind may organize the production of local products for visitors and create tourist paths (nature, industrial past, architecture, monuments). It can certainly do exhibitions for their proper community and other interested parties. It should give a ready service to the educational institutions, but also the local industry, enterprises and tourism; it can help by assembled expertise and experiences to any global strategies of the development.<sup>13</sup> Needless to say, such a museum makes exhibitions, offers lectures, organizes visits, contacts owners of heritage objects, does all the contacts with visitors and organized groups – much like any other active museum. But the different museum would avoid actions that cause cognitive dissonances, that are not challenging to their possible visitors. It would find in any theme a possible way and a connotation to link it to the very local circumstances so that the response becomes immediate and influence fruitful – a general natural history museum in a certain town must seek a cooperation from local hunters, fishermen or geological association with which it can make an exhibition "The soil that we stand upon", which will obtain the profitable link of participation and assure that museum dedicates a part of its presentation to the very local theme.

It is hardly conceivable any more that museums do some attractive job in complete and constant separation of one from the other. Once together they can be overwhelmed by the multitude of possible themes. They are bound to flow out of attractive associations if dwelling upon separated facts. Two meaningless data together may mean an information. Happily enough, the recent practice of multidisciplinary exhibitions (unfortunately too often done or initiated by non-museum world) shows clearly (by the numbers of visitors and by their social and intellectual composition) that the communicational barrier of traditional museums has

ceased.

The final objective of museums is not an eschatological truth or a scientific consensus. The truth and consensus are only dialectical states, not aims. The objective of museum is – with all the philosophical and ethical deepness of motivation – better living. That certainly includes the parameter of dignity and self-respect. This applies dramatically to the developing countries and their museums.

Zagreb, July 1989

Notes:

1. Toffler, Alvin.
2. McLuhan, Marshall.
3. Barthes, Roland. 1980. Culture et Communication. Numero extra-ordinaire, March, 1980.
4. Écomusées en France – Premières Rencontres Nationales des Écomusées. Agence Régionale d'Ethnologie, Rhône-Alpes, 1987; Duclos, Jean-Claude, p. 62.
5. Ibid.
6. Museum Magic. Museums and the New Technology, p. 101. Proceedings of the Annual Conference of Museums Association of Australia, Oct. 1980, Sydney.
7. MacLuhan, Marshall.
8. Morin, Edgar. 1981. Kako izi i iz XX stolje a. Globus, Zagreb, (Original: Pour sortir du XX siècle, Ed. Fernand Nathan, 1981. Paris).
9. Schouten, Frans. 1986. A paper presented at the symposium of CECA, 1986, La Villette, Paris.
10. See the note No. 4.
11. Desvallés, André, ibid. From the definition of Georges Henri Rivière given in the lecture, 10th of Dec. 1976 .
12. Very much according to the ideas of Kenneth Hudson, expressed on many occasions.
13. Mostly according to the experiences as listed in the publication "Écomusées en France", see the note No. 4.

## 2. Museum education – museological treatment of identity

A lecture delivered in the International UNESCO Seminar "Museums and Education", Mexico 1986

From the very beginning the institution of modern museums was aimed at enlightenment. This represents approximately two centuries of practice, using different methods and strategies to achieve that goal. Just like the means of production in a given society, museums are consequently marked in the nature of their endeavour by their proprietor, the ambitions of the person or persons who own it. That is why the mission of the museum in history is parallel to socio-economic and cultural history.

We find today that contemporary society (relatively democratic and affluent - if we are at all able to make such a generalization) keeps more or less the same museological scheme. In this scheme the educational role of museums is clearly defined. However different the definitions of museums are within specific cultural and/or ideological circumstances, the educational task is but one and not the most important obligation of museums. Besides, education as a process of transferring socially shaped knowledge is too narrow a term to denote more precisely the nature of museum communication. Even the term socialization (i.e. the process of transformation of the biological individual into a social being) which is insisted upon by ideologically compact systems, is not wide enough. I suggest therefore that we talk about a multidimensional communicational obligation and ambition of museums, in its nature, in its methodology and in its aims. In fact we talk about the giant task of transferring the entire human experience and tracing out the multitude of changes of the environment (natural and cultural). The museum, therefore, is not an educational institution in the sense that schools are (it's more than that). Here we raise new questions and find ourselves obliged to answer some dilemmas. Namely, neither the museum working process nor the ambitions of museums can be defined by the analogy to other institutions, schools included. It is a very specific mission that, in its paradigmatic and methodological dimensions, has to be defined by contemporary museology. A museum is not an aim in itself, it is a means; neither collecting objects or the object themselves can be an aim, all that is just a means. A means to what? Communication.

The essence of museum institution is its informal character because the museum stores hardly represents else but a certain capacity of memory. In the museum working process, this capacity can be transformed into a communicational value. The museum is an information bank, which comprises the disposition of a usable fund of data. But again, within this logic of information, we find the same old questions: the ownership of the information and presumptions in the collecting of it. The professionalism of approach, the possibilities of presentation, methods and aims of presentation – all that covers but some of the very important parameters that can define the entire character of the museum's mission. However, all the segments of the museum working process must function towards the final purpose of communication. The "display" of that informative museum venture, i.e. the museum exhibition, represents a three-dimensional, informational collage or – to paraphrase S.Eisenstein – a (museum) montage of attractions. In the future museum work will not omit terminology like "objectivity", "truthfulness", "reliability", etc., but these ambitions will stand for different interpretations, doubts expressed and multiple views represented.

It may be clear from what has been said that museum communication is necessarily a creative process that is very clearly defined. (I think personally that it is high time we admit some inability to implement norms and finalize everything – there are things that prevent it.) In this

context "creative" means indeed "able to produce a new quality", even to some extent it should mean artistic (this can certainly sound offensive to the militants of the implementation of norms among museum people or to the militants of mysticism among artists). Most museum presentations are (in spite of much effort in arrangement and artistic display, and in spite of luxurious equipment, lightning, etc.) still a kind of open storage concept, an idea similar to that of study storage. Unlike in the real storage, the objects are easily recognized or seen, they are probably put in chronological order and bear short explanations. On the other hand, this should be pointed out, new storage areas in museums look more and more like devised exhibitions.

Now, this also helps us to see museums as educational institutions. In school a pupil turns the pages of a book, whereas here the visitor has the sequence of objects and rooms. The illustrations from the pages of books have just become three-dimensional and the text (alas!) becomes a hardly visible legend on the wall. Museums and schools have come out of the same tradition of enlightenment and from the bourgeois ambition to conquer and reign over the environment, to subdue everything to its ideal of progress, its interests. Therefore, both museums and schools represent the offshoots of the very same mechanistic, cartesian logic that claimed the existence of infiniteness, that believed in its superiority...(Two wars were necessary to end the dream and make felt the cold reality of the ground.)

The school is probably entitled and obliged to hand over, to transfer a certain amount of positive knowledge, but that is in no sense an obligation of the museum. It is most true, however, that a history museum will always, by the mere fact of presentation, hand over to its visitors a certain exact knowledge, but this would not be the aim. In the transfer of experience (which is what museums should do) the aim is evidently to enrich the visitor with the experience (and the effects of it) that – objectively speaking – the visitor could not get or may not be able to achieve otherwise. The purpose of correct museum communication is to provide arguments and evidences for the effective understanding of some problems, phenomena, relations (in time and space). The purpose of that creative communication is the establishment (creation) of sensitivity to the world around us and its future. It is also a creation of a sense of participation – in good and bad – that the museum should obtain. This is why we have the past presented in museums! Not because of itself, not because it moves our nostalgic feelings – nostalgia is destructive force – or to have the old myths revived or to transfer us spiritually to a time that never will and never should belong to us; what we need from the past is a sublimation that is not the past itself, but obviously would be a lot of powerful images in the spirit that can reconstruct it in our minds - at least the part we can profit the most from. A same individual does not try to live with all of his memories: they are transformed in the amalgam of experience, into a result usable in survival. This is an analogy that works also for museums: a museum is a social mechanism (although not the only one) engaged in the search for the model of survival. As a condensed experience, a digested experience, it is an ideal medium of wisdom. In the informatic revolution – in the third wave civilization, or the global village (if you like McLuhan) – museum can stand in for the "council of elders", a social mechanism that civilization of man knew throughout its history. Nobody claims that the museum is the only institution in charge of wise living on the planet Earth. However, the museum will become more and more a cybernetic, social mechanism; in the era of the Great Anxiety, the era of the universal loss-of-identity syndrom, its usable values gain importance.

Based on those traditional (basically the 19th century) assumptions, the majority of today's museums are usable to implement any substantial constructive influence upon its visitors. If it tries to do it by way of a traditional educational school approach (however "different" it may

look if pupils sit on the floor), I think it's better without it.

Being what it is the museum has to have its own methodology and different transfer of message, otherwise it just repeats the task of the school. According to the informative nature of museums, any form of information can become a museum object. (Further along this logic we may claim that literally everything in museum – presentation techniques included – serves a data or even information carrier.) Besides all the means of "abstract presentation" there are more and more so called substitutes among which all forms of audio-visual interventions can be found. The museum will always suffer the span of its ambitions: from scientific ones to temptations of becoming a theatre (we know quite a few institutions that are a result of the splitting up of those two functions: research and presentation). The changing nature of the museum object is partly due to the fact that museum turn from object (i.e. products) orientation towards concept (i.e. process) orientation. Speaking about museum education, this shift from positive knowledge towards phenomenal knowledge is important. Besides, what we are interested in is, again, getting the message across in a most effective way. "Effective" applies very much to "quality".

There are quite a few grand, encyclopaedic museums in the world; there is also a huge number of museums created according to a certain academic discipline and many other museums whose purpose is to preserve the memory of important personalities and events. But, there is also a number of smaller complex museums who came into existence as a direct necessity for affirmation and preservation of the identity of certain towns, cities, areas, etc. Smaller cultural circles felt their identity endangered. The vital strength of the museum world is certainly not with encyclopaedic museums like the Metropolitan or Louvre, but with those small museums who are necessarily forced to offer direct answers to the very interested public.

Speaking in general, museums are no longer tacitly expected to serve big myths, to accumulate pharaonic treasure trove, as evidence of the excellence and superiority of their owner. The main break in museum philosophy is, I think, the turn from eternity to the present. Once turned in this direction we begin to see problems and, probably, ways to solve them.

The redefined task of museums sounds even banal in its simplicity: **IDENTITY PROTECTION**. It applies to anything from continents to individuals, from nature to artefacts, from material culture to spiritual values...To generalize broadly, we may talk about the identity of the planet Earth being endangered by too many and too profound changes.

So, an exhibition of butterflies as a neat arrangement of divisions and variations with scientific labels may be very useful for students of biology (i.e. school) but not for an average museum visitor. It does not answer those basic, ordinary questions, neither does it teach him useful concepts: it would be better if the exhibition showed how many butterflies disappear yearly, and what mutations happen because of the pollution, or indeed, what is the place of butterflies within the natural balance. What is usually done, whether deliberately or not, that we show off our superiority over nature. Or, take the example of a museum with living objects, i.e. zoological garden. What should be done there is probably to try and give back the necessary dignity to the living world, explaining the circumstances in which some ten thousand species annually disappear from the planet forever. A sensitive person will easily conclude that what is done in zoos is drastic evidence of man's hypocrisy towards the natural environment.

Very much like the administration, museums experience a latent temptation to forget the reason of their existence, the purpose of their effort. Much of the museum work nowadays has become rather automatic and formal: the technology of museum work, we may say, has overtaken, has covered the necessary "software", the motives, or if you allow, the true museum mission. How else can you explain the million dollar acquisition of a greek vase in the Metropolitan Museum? How else can you explain the perfectionist attachment of many museums to the techniques, to the sophistication of "hardware"? What really makes a museum is its communication. And, if we don't mind, the collection is there to make it possible.

Bearing this in mind, the obligation of museums is counter-activity, its function being corrective, in the cybernetic sense. It is a living, interested, participatory and very much a flexible museum. Its area of interest is the present and it is also territorially defined. Such a museum is the least educational but it is more than that: it is an indispensable medium of expression and identity, a generator of collective conscience, that lost sensibility for the environment and introspection.

### 3. FROM EDUCATION TO COMMUNICATION (TÄSTÄ UUSI VERSIO)

A speech presented in the ICOM meeting in Paris 6-12 July  
1987. Published in ICOM news, Vol. 40, No 3/4 1987.

Once upon a time, two men went for a trip in a balloon but a sudden storm blew them off course and when it had died down they realized they were completely lost. They were relieved to see a man walking along below and they shouted down to him: "Hello there! Where are we?" The little figure on the ground shouted back: "You're in a balloon." The two above looked at each other and one said: "He must be a museum curator." "What makes you think that?" said the other. "Because the information he gave us is perfectly correct but totally useless!"

I don't even think this joke is over-exaggerated in its metaphorical sense – on the contrary. I am sure that the message of museums in the 19th century was meaningful, but today it no longer has that obvious quality. In any case, we shall never again return to that state of promising, bright new perspectives. There was a new trust in a happy future; there was a new ideology, and all the enemies were so obvious. You are all aware of the storms the world has gone through since then, as well as of the prevailing, probably never-ending one – the drama of constant change. It is a state near to panic. The era of Great Anxiety<sup>1</sup> has often been mentioned within the museum world but in the last few years some museum people have started to refuse the idea of museums being in crisis. And indeed, new museums are sprouting at an unprecedented rate. They have their slot in the media and are much talked about. Nevertheless, the crisis does exist, but it is one of concept and not of the institution itself. The growing numbers only prove that museums are needed: the emergency survival call is directed to us, amongst others. But the frustrations are even more apparent in the majority of new museums.

Museums have to change, and for two reasons. First, as institutions they must fight for their own existence, or they risk becoming irrelevant. Secondly, they obviously have to fulfil their real mission in society. The boundaries between institutions and disciplines are fading due to the logic of human needs, of the human mind, of circumstances and of informatics, and the area of heritage protection and its communication widely exceeds the competence of museums. So, since we need defined terms, museum is any creative effort of cybernetic action on the basis of complex experience of heritage. I think we shall soon be redefining the entire museum cause into *continuity* (meaning preservation of any identity) and *survival*. Museums are a reflection of our civilization and environment and that is why I claim that everything in the working process of the museum must serve the final goal of interpretation, which, nowadays, should mean communication. The ultimate form of any creative interpretation is *art* and though it may be some way off yet, that is clearly the future of museum communication. What do they have in common? The same point of departure (*identity*), the same capacity (*creativity*) and the same method (*interpretation*).

As one of our colleagues rightly claims: "every curatorial decision has interpretative consequences. Every design concept has an interpretative message. Every administrative decision reflects assumptions about what kinds of interpretations are sought and how they are best achieved."<sup>2</sup> Museum educators are therefore responsible for finalizing the entire museum effort. With a tradition of some hundred years behind it (!) the concept of the museum's educational role must be re-thought if it is to attain its true dimension. But, and this is one of the firmest points of my approach to the problem, this transformation cannot be achieved

through the museum education department. If it is not an integral part of the new approach to the museum institution in its entirety then nothing substantially new will happen. It is not a matter of all museum curators becoming educators, or communicators, but they must have communication in mind when playing their part. However obvious and important behind the scenes, science is only the *basis* of the museums. So, either we work for the science (in which case not necessarily within a museum), or we supply a scientific support, using a science as a guaranty of the relevance of our information potential.

Having a good understanding of the nature of things and of life has been an honourable ambition of mankind throughout its history. But what in the past was difficult has become a drama of the contemporary world. The majority of public schools as well as of higher education institutions are mere knowledge factories dispensing a mechanical methodology to fill the brain with innumerable data which do not add up to a logical whole. Most museums follow the same Cartesian, mechanistic and rationalistic model, like a kind of tridimensional school picture book. Their innovations are superficial as they try hard to find new ways of doing the same old thing. That is how they use the wonderful new technology. Let me quote something which was written over forty years ago: "To a great extent the failure of our social adjustment arises in a divorce at the school level between (...) knowledge and the creation of a social conscience."<sup>3</sup> This entire concept belongs to the "second wave civilization" and to its corresponding "second wave museums".<sup>4</sup>

If schools find it difficult to overcome their inherent weakness museums may at least be able to stop following them. Education is often a one-way process. Museums need a process with feedback. Irrespective of their having received pedagogical training or not, museum educational personnel must use their specific academic discipline as a basis for multidisciplinary research leading to the final aim of communication. Schools can produce over-specialized "authorities", and such people can also work in museums. Of course I am not talking about those museum institutions which are doing excellent work described as, to mark the difference, "sensory education" based upon "school of sensibility".<sup>5</sup>

What strikes me in the majority of museums is their attempt to offer systematic knowledge on a somewhat permanent basis, instead of concentrating on fostering awareness, conceptual thinking, accessibility to new ideas, rethinking of old concepts. This insistence upon the acquisition of knowledge makes them simply a pale version of schools. A scientifically arranged display of thousands of pinned butterflies in a natural history department attempts to demonstrate the variety and classification of the species. On coming out of the museum you can only admire curatorial expertise and minimize yourself. You might also envy the curators their exotic trips and the luxury of their scientific, scholarly detachment from the problems of the world outside outside the comfortable silence of the museum. Only rarely you do have the pleasure of discovering that someone has tried to anticipate your questions and to tell you a good, well argued story about, say, butterflies – how important, interesting, dangerous they are; how many things around us have been inspired by them and, perhaps, how sad or imprudent it would be to lose them.

Education is not convincing, but intellectual re-creation is. But are we always expected to be convincing? Surely one cannot talk of an organized plot set up by the Establishment, and yet we find that some of the things we are trying to do suddenly lack the necessary support. Megastructures have subtle ways of "influencing". If you invent a product that makes all others obsolete and requires a major change in production policies, a big company will buy your invention and bury it. If you go too far explaining current policies, whether it be of the

art market, politics, economics, social institutions, industry, or whatever, and if you start a counter-campaign (even in the form of a slightly provocative exhibition), you'd better get ready to leave. When Establishment likes you, be sure you are doing wrong: museums always give the impression of being democratic, by their very essence, but the power holders and decision makers only like museums when they feel flattered by them. When Mr Money (he has a different name in some countries) finances huge museum exhibitions, he brings hundreds of paintings from wherever business trips take him; exhibitions are planned within business discussions, and when everything has been given the media glamour treatment you cannot but consent – tacitly at any rate. Yet would you really be keen to explain the logic of art history through the example of a new "genius" created at a between-planes business lunch? In the manipulated museum, wherever it may be, you do not communicate but only praise the generous Master's taste in correctly guessing the next step in art history. If art is increasingly international and if it is money-generated and museum-protected, what can be said of those who have little money and whose museums are poor? Neo-colonial museums and their masters could not care less.

The new museum communicator must also reckon with refusal and misunderstanding on the part of the public. The average museum visitor is very attached to "eternal values" and to "standards of excellence". He has been moulded by a long tradition in which museums played a very active part. He admires the superlative in things and people. He likes the comforting drug of identification with promoted ideals. Relics, eternity, real, genuine, originality, objectiveness, truth, etc. are all parts of the story. Of course none of this is bad in itself but new museology insists upon meaningful associations and aims.

I have never understood why art historians are not employed in technology museums: those three dozen cars over there would suddenly tell an attractive story of the history of design. If you add a sociologist, mute metal will speak an even clearer language. Our museums represent a puzzle with parts no one has ever made to fit. Why are French cars different from German or American ones? Why are the same products conceived and designed differently in different countries? If museum educators used their collections to answer questions such as these they would be teaching creative thinking and logical linking of diverse data. Perhaps someone could explain to me why our civilization is so desperately trying to force people to memorize and to teach machines how to think! I would certainly advise museum communicators to fight that horrifying nonsense.

In the next ten to fifteen years I believe museums will be demanding a free status, just as universities once did. Even the talk about communication makes no sense if the entire position and strategy of museums remains the same: museum or any institutionalized action in the field of heritage cannot simply take the passive form of documenting and storing material evidence. Active attitudes or alternative action force museums into the world of harsh reality. That is what a museum educator must be leading and this is very rarely the case at present. Logically, so one could say, knowing that on the whole museums belong to the "second wave civilization", to the civilization of what McLuhan would call "literary man": "It is the classic posture of literary man to 'point with pride' and 'view with alarm' whilst scrupulously ignoring what's going on." In our world museum association we also rationalize our frustrations by creating Resolutions which become the only response to an "emergency call" for an endangered planet. The world is still pursuing quantity whereas it is in fact no longer a question of "more" but of "better", in the sense of quality.

By letting people discover what was hitherto hidden, see what was not so obvious and admit

what seemed impossible, museums can foster a true widening of intellectual scope. Museums should also serve to transfer the entire human experience thus enabling people to orientate themselves and to make independent decisions in the face of new situations. I believe that by acquiring a wider intellectual approach and understanding of historical experience one becomes *tolerant*, and that is what is needed so desperately in this world. The museum differs from the formal education system because "it has access to human spontaneity, that spring of goodness, inventiveness and skill"<sup>6</sup>; some authors go so far as to say that "the duty we must perform is to provide the experiences upon which the public can form a reliable intuition"<sup>7</sup>. What a far cry from the mere acquisition of knowledge!

It seems to me to be unnecessary and even unfair to criticize all museum educational practice. It is hard, and even sometimes impossible, to be different and act differently in highly conditioned professional and social circumstances. As a museologist, and being unable to change the outer context, I prefer the effort of changing museums. The first step to be taken is to create a new breed of partisans, i.e. museum curators who are trained expressly for museum work, who are therefore familiar with the historical experience of heritage protection, and who understand the museum's true mission. We need intellectuals capable of synthesizing and integrating diverse knowledge into a coherent whole, of identifying usable historic experience, and of answering the constant question: where are we? All developments in the museum concept so far have been leading towards increased communication – from Bickmore lantern slides to Will Sandberg's projects and G.H.Rivière's *Musée des Arts and Traditions Populaires*, and to the most recent practice of ecomuseums.

As for museum communicators, they must be a very special breed. Whatever their age and experience they must remain eager and enthusiastic. Goethe said in 1825: "We learn only from those whom we love." There is no such thing as a final solution for our professional problems. If it is serious, museology will never try to offer one, just as no philosophy offers practical solutions to everyday life. Setting up a universal pattern for museums and museum workers is against the very essence of the museum's nature since museums serve identity but also grow out of it. Bearing this in mind, I should nevertheless like to offer the following advice to museum educators:

- Museum programmes must be built "around the interests of our audience rather than around artefacts"<sup>8</sup>.
- Make people recognize their own problems, dilemmas, qualities, failures, misunderstandings. Console them by making them understand and give them mental magnets for orientation in historical experience.
- Continuing traditional education in museums may, "for the public, end up with museums and galleries being associated in their minds with instant mind improvement, a kind of cultural soup ticket from the government..."<sup>9</sup>.
- You may continue calling your job "teaching" or "educating" (as some of us still consent to use the term museology) but the contents of this denomination must bring the effects of changed behaviour.
- Fight for equal participation of museum communicators in the creation of the entire museum policy.
- Do not educate. You are there to associate and sympathize.
- Do not teach. Try to give the visitors intellectual and sensory pleasure. Then they will start receiving the message. Learn from those who are most effective – like rock concerts (and please don't say that a rock concert is not important).
- Do not simply answer questions. Correct them too.
- Let visitors get involved: Have them produce; have them give; have them take (even if it

means buying).

– Keep in mind that the museum's *raison d'être* does not lie in itself nor in its objects.

Museum is medium and means; it is there to serve as a major *transfer of wisdom*.<sup>10</sup>

– When doing your job, ask yourself the most simple questions nobody ever poses: some think they know too much to ask them; others think they know too little to admit it.

If a museum cannot perform all three segments of its mission, namely, as defined by Hugues de Varine, those of action, research and development, as a museum communicator you will be unable to fulfil your mission. New museology, or "heritology", deals very much with the problem and provides a usable set of strategic changes. The world is very much a lost balloon and our profession seems to be a part of the crew instead of having ground under its feet. The emergency call is obviously directed to us too. Would you take the responsibility of answering it with perfect but useless information?

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4. Šola, Tomislav. 1983. "Towards a Modern Concept of Museology". *Informatologia Yugoslavica*, December 1983, pp. 211–225.

5. Giraudy, Danièle and Bouilet, Henri. 1977. *Le musée et la vie*. *La Documentation Française*, p. 88. Paris.

6. Wittlin, Alma S. 1949. *The Museum: Its History and Its Tasks in Education*, p. 221. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

7. *Museums and the New Technology*, p. 9. Proceedings of the Annual Conference of Museums Associations of Australia, October 1980, Sydney.

8. *Ibid*, p. 49.

9. Strong, Roy. 1970. "Museums: New Horizons for the Seventies". *Museums Journal*, Vol. 70, No. 3, 1970, pp. 102–104.

10. From a project for a book "Between Vanity and Wisdom: Essays on the History and Future of Museums", T. Šola.

#### 4. Communication of museums

##### A view upon the context

Has it ever appeared you to think how museums fall into the same mythological paradox expressed by the story of the Procrustus' hospitality: he would accept guests giving them beds but would either stretch them or cut them in order to fit to the bed's exact size. Taken as a whole, museums offer the same kind of hospitality. That is what comes to my mind when we talk about museum education. To put it briefly if I may, I would say that education should be a problem of educational institutions. Their customers are cut to a proper size, well classified and mostly obliged by the law to make a disciplined part of the standardized process. Their defects are very much our problem too, but we should leave the solutions to educationalists. I have myself passed through rather good schools but finished mutilated by the process, if I am allowed to admit. Maybe this is why I was inclined to understand museums as a sort of corrective mechanism, in a way superposed to that configuration of knowledge transfer institutions. But, traditional museums are not understanding their role as such. I still see them competing in this area where they are neither needed nor expected. Coming back to the metaphor of Procrustus' bed, I am using museums to get my "original" adequate, proper shape back so that nothing is cut nor stretched beyond its inherent logic. It is, happily enough, impossible to generalize, but most of the schools teach you for their own sake – if better, they teach you for your profession – and very rarely indeed they venture into teaching their disciples for living. I do not dare to say for creative living.

Besides, indeed, schools – educational institutions – are there to ensure the transfer of the socially formed knowledge – a task that must be too narrow for museums. To be informative after the rationalistic Cartesian philosophy, after mechanistic logic, and to belong to the "second wave civilization, may be acceptable to the educational institutions but surely not to museums. And yet, it is a prevailing state of affairs. I will come back to that. This has been an anachronism for quite a while, maybe the last half of the century. As tension has kept growing almost unrecognized by the profession, we have found ourselves in the different world with disordered ranks and with a multitude of uniforms that look similar but are not the same: Although we are more numerous than ever (a million professionals, maybe two, in thirty, forty thousand museums), we are not an army. Sticking to this metaphor that suggests even aggressive action of museums, may I just add that we lack headquarters, that we lack criteria of who we are, who our enemy is and what is the strategy that we shall apply to all of us. And there is still one more question: How can we obtain the full support of people so that we become more a movement than an institutionalized army?

(To those who expect me to keep to the theme of education, I can only say: we *are* talking about that. You don't solve this question at the level of the museum output. There you are tied up already, desperately conditioned – the destiny of your mission starts up with the very museum idea and certainly depends upon its fate.)

Let us not venture into analysis of the pitfalls of the present world. Be it the "drama of the constant change" or the "Era of the Great Anxiety", the entropic whirl is turning faster and faster. As a civilization (and that goes more to the developed world) we seem to have put our technology against our temple and press the trigger with a devilish laughter. We may grow up one day, as a civilization of man, but to do it we have to survive. (Just like museums, a scientific text cannot tolerate a phrase like "devilish laughter": In what connection it is to the idea of devil? Is "laughter" referring to any specific form of social behaviour recognizable as

part of usual reactions? What are the statistical data (upon which sample of population) for the above claims? What are the relevant sources concerning the existence of "devilish laughter"- pattern of behaviour? etc. No conversation would be possible if we would apply scientific rules to it. This is why we cannot have conversation in our museums...).

## II

When I was still trying to become myself a good museum educator (one of the rare initiatives I ever felt so fond of) I saw two effects clearly: my fellow curators started to call me "cicerone" and took my decision as a sign of professional inaptitude (like I was not good enough for the "real" curatorial job); secondly, I started to hate to be a protagonist of a cultural matrix in which a visit to a museum is paid or organized as an expected ritual. When a group, a school class of teenagers comes with a teacher to a minimalist art show I believe they feel exactly like Sir Roy Strong would claim: associating it with "instant mind improvement, a kind of cultural soup ticket from the government". What a museum educator usually does offer is a mixture of mystification and mythology but the public accepts it readily as it is exactly what they expect to get. An easy task for a museum educator too as it is exactly what he or she has been taught at the university. There is no effort implied and nobody is unhappy (even the history of art itself as it stays in its noble aloofness, sacred as it wishes). Visitors usually do not ask but ritual questions that do no harm to the unwritten rules of the game. Those questions that stem from the very common sense they avoid because it would reveal their ignorance: some think they know too much to pose them while others think they know too little to admit it. Knowing that, I would usually pose the question myself: Is this artist a madman or is he pulling our legs, fooling us? (The painting would consist of a white untreated canvas with a black horizontal line from one edge to the other.) Would he or she know how to draw or paint a real horse, a bunch of real flowers and a "psychological portrait" with eyes that always follow you? Since the answer was "yes" (and one can usually illustrate it with some early works) one may even provoke a second question which asks why the person abandoned the "real" art and turned to this... Then questions start to pour out of the accumulation behind the barrier of the expected behaviour. The harvest may be distant or may never come but the seeds are sown successfully.

This is already more than mere education – it is a first stage of communication. Anything further than that would be inconceivable in a traditional museum institution. But let us again leave the special interest to explore the context. The definition of museum communication lies in fact in other distinctions out of which we have touched only general points and a distinction between so called old and new concepts. Further on we should define the place of our intended communication within the typology of institutions that are heritage based. After that, we should be conscious of the vast institutional and non-institutional configuration that shares the same denominator of heritage information. Following that a museum communicator should define his place and mission studying the character of the institutional machine in which he occupies a certain position. The entire process is possible and correct if done in the full awareness of the existence and the needs of their public.

The primary evil, the fertile ground of all the imperfections and defects is called – institutionalism. As a structure of formal relations of some organization an institution tends to become stiff and rigid. As an abstract scheme of coordination of relations and of objectives, it is apt to become formal. Viewed as a fundamental factor of consistency of some system of social relations it may be latently conservative and traditionalistic. An institution as a form is

death of a direct creativity and the end of spontaneous processes. An institution is, to count other sins of it, still the following: a negation of individuality, mechanism for creation of cultural patterns, a method for creation of the absolute, collective identity (where culture is everything and an individual is irrelevant); it has got an immanent repressive character, it has an immanent ambition to reshape the individual, it may easily appropriate a reactionary concept suitable to the both extreme ideologies – that of the entrepreneurial avarice and that of the totalitarian corruption. In short, to paraphrase Shakespeare: Frailty, thy name is institution. And yet we cannot do without it as it is a very useful invention of the civilizational technology: it made everything good, within the rapid development, possible. On the other extreme we have the doctrine of Pjotr Kropotkin which says that "we have nothing to fear from Freedom" – except anarchist chaos, inefficiency and lack of dominant developments. So, it is good to know the vices of institutionalism. The cure should always be searched for in the refreshing individualism and inspiring alternative. Any vital, sane institutionalism, museum one included, lives on absorbing the alternative. One may however doubt whether museums have finally reached that art of survival. Their alternative, namely, has grown on its own, fighting for the public attention more successfully than them.

The enclosed diagram is a try to make some, however artificial, distinction between communicational levels one could perhaps distinguish in the heritage-based institutions. Higher cognitive levels, 3rd and 2nd are traditionally there. The level of "applied science" – that of traditional museums – stayed unchanged for too long time ignoring thus the rapidly changing circumstances: growing number of potential users and widening area of application. That being for too a long time ignored by museums, gave rise to the dynamic alternative: first of all to the heritage based entertainment business and secondly to the alternative museum institutions. That latter development should have been anticipated by the traditional museum sector in time, had it not been for their latent conservatism. Only lately, after the twenty odd years of the ecomuseum tradition, we witness the real change within the field. It seems like this first cognitive level of communication (with the widest possible circle of users) is being established. We have always needed that sort of the "initiatory", interest awakening or interest creating institutional level. If we regard museums and kindred institutions as complementary to the educational system, then, indeed, they should be offering a democratic opportunity to people to bypass the lacks or defects of their schooling.

The cognitive level "0" is currently characteristic for the western affluent societies, that Thorsten Veblen would call "the societies of the conspicuous consumption". The so called communism forces the masses to attain the cognitive level of "intelligentsia" helping thus the project of manipulation and transforming the majority ("the masses") into the cultural and communicational robots. The western societies use the aggressive persuasivism of their consumption and leisure industries to transform the crowd into wild hedonists. The simple point of both repressions (not imposing the comparison, though) is to keep "the masses busy": in the first case by indoctrination and fight for the daily survival, and in the second by inspiring existential fever and frantic consumerism. Using the drama of endangered identities as a transfer, those heritage based entertainment institutions have established one of the most accumulative industries of modern times.

### III

A lot has been said already about traditional museums. For the most part the attitudes were either apology or unreserved criticism. But let me advocate another view before I try to

picture what a new, contemporary museum as a communicational mechanism should be. Understanding the nature of change means also a certain tolerance which enables the fruitful coexistence of the old and the new. The urgency of change concerns new projects as they should differ from the old, traditional practice: exposing the well established and orderly functioning museums to the obligatory or even abrupt change would be an injustice that cultural policy could justify. It would be too a risky responsibility to change Dumbarton Oaks Museum, Elizabeth Stewart Gardner museum or Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek...They are achievements of their kind, culturological facts, themselves the objects of the imaginary museum of the civilization of man. We are talking about the change through addition as it would be shame to repeat old models in the time of different needs. The radicalism should not become violent as it ends up in the extremes. One should have a strong dislike for insistence upon the highbrow, specialist museums ("bureaus of standards of excellence", knowing that people also need responsive, relaxed museums). One should equally dislike the new interactive science centres where too much activity and noise blur and block the intended useful effects.

The practice is rather resistant to the theory and the conceptual analysis of our profession. Automatism and bureaucratism of our profession agrees well with the prevailing patterns of our civilization. Faced with final choices and eschatological visions we may finally start to doubt that "further" and "more" need at least a counterpart in "better".

"Working for the future generations", the phrase one often hears from museum directors, is an implied excuse for missing the point. Museums are about life and make sense only if they serve the life. They have to support the vital forces of the continuation of identities and of their adjustment in the changing conditions. If the museum does not function on that philosophy as a whole, I doubt that one can count upon a usable communication with its users. What we are talking about when saying "communication" is obviously a counteractive museum, and not a new traditional museum in the technological disguise or museum-like entertainment business.

The museum must grow out of the precise analysis of the given identity and perfect knowledge of the needs that bring it into the existence. Therefore, and the new theory is clear upon that, there is no way to build up a model of an institution that can be applied universally. The very concept of ecomuseums started to have difficulties when some protagonists thought it to be an exportable model. But the principles are: interdisciplinarity, participation of users and development. Methodology should comprise the integral treatment of the heritage, permanent process of deinstitutionalization, correspondence between the population and the territory, counteractive philosophy etc.

The ecomuseums should be merited for enabling us to say "l'écomusée et la population qui le vit..." ("ecomuseum and the population that lives it..."). A point further would be to claim that the museum is living the life of its community. Whatever the museum is, that is the general principle that makes it educational and communicational. An object centred museum builds up an enormous collection while a community centred museum builds up a usable structure able to respond to the most delicate needs of the users. It usually comprises existence of the collection but not as the central and primary issue, only a solid departure point for the process.

Communicational museum is a place with a ready and useful information, hospitable point where one can find knowledge and learn concepts, a documentation centre where material and spiritual are united by the appropriate mixture of sources, disregarding their substance and technology – where the information upon the context is available. As one of our colleagues

says: "Bref, de permettre au musée de s'ouvrir avec méthode à la complexité confuse de la vie et de ses transformations pour en livrer l'expression la plus globale et la plus accessible. Cela quoiqu'on en pense relève plus d'un état d'esprit que de moyens matériels et financiers" ("Shortly, opening the museum systematically to the confusing complexity of life and its transformations, to offer its most global and accessible expression. This, whatever one may think, recovers of a certain spiritual state than it would be possible with material and financial means").

I have tried so far to give even the list of "do-s" and "don't-s" for museum communicators, as I know that most people like the sensation of precise and final truth. In fact, I doubt that anything but changed professional philosophy, together with devotion and talent, can make somebody's work communicationally successful. This explains again why knowing museums as phenomenon, knowing the entire area of heritage care, knowing the subtleties of institutional mechanisms, and finally, knowing the mega-trends of this civilization of ours – can represent the only solid basis for creating a powerful communicational medium of museums. I am reluctant to admit that I see museums and kindred institutions in a vision of the totally new profession which will have one of the important tasks to play in the destiny of mankind. But, indeed, museums have to be loved; and, to be loved they have to love, as an old latin proverb teaches us. What can you do about it? Study the history of the heritage care, study the history of our own institution, get to know very closely your public and what its history means...By knowing your users – the best you can do is to reverse the traditional system – you identify yourself with them and then you will see the panorama of unexpressed wishes and aspirations. Touch their irrational self and the whole world opens in which you are expected to exercise your art.

A museum communicator should be able to see that treasury of museum collection only as a raw material. If not, the best he can do is transferring the knowledge. If he sees his position as a creative one, he may count with communication (that, being the two way process means a feedback and the opportunity to learn while teaching). If by some happy circumstance we have a person with feeling for the museum medium, knowledge of processes and a talent for communication, we may have the creative metamorphosis where the informational potential of museum becomes a well of inspiration and wisdom. D.S.Ripley was talking about museums and their role in "survival" and "salvation" of human kind. He was not the first and there were many of our colleagues that followed, but their vision never took roots, the precious seed which beared the code of greatness still lies in dry ground. While we are desperately late as a profession to claim our place among the decisive contemporary professions. It is because of this that academic discussions about the subtleties of the working process may seem like treating the bruises of a dying patient.

Allow me, finally, the liberty of comparison of some of these problems with car races – something we all seem to understand so well. If we compare a museum with a car, than tradition was such that those who made it and those who make it ready for driving, say mechanics, were the only to be seen around it. Whoever denies their importance does a great injustice, but that explains however why museums were always the last. When this shame became so obvious to endanger the very participation of our car in the incessant competition of professions, some drivers were admitted to join, but so far they are neither allowed to criticize the machine nor to express their concern or objections with the job of the crew in the box... Keeping up with the comparison that may not be the most appropriate one, I would say that museum communicators took the role of the driver, but to their surprise, they may find that the gear shift is on the wrong side and that the wheel is missing. Due to the

fascination with technique, those who make cars and build museums are apt to supply you with the splendour of gadgets but will not care to supply your vehicle with winning chances. Whether you are a curator or a communicator you may find the progress of your institution a rather risky matter, say, without headlights, the part which I assign to the theory of the profession (whether we still decide to call it Museology or not). Without it you may have your eyes opened but you will perceive only what you bump into.

As to the future of museum communication – it will be a great one. Why? Because museum communicators will grow in number and importance. Their professional concern will "colour" the entire museum institution (or what becomes of it) and their role will diversify further. As technology was always the curse and the blessing of museums, museum communicators will often find themselves the brain behind the most part of the show: They will grow up to be able to create the software of the first spreading patches of the total, imaginary museum.

But, as I have a feeling that some may accuse me of the irresponsible, false prophecies (while I have only the future to stand for me), let me exercise some "laconica brevitatis", the form so beloved by all whose religion is pragmatism:

- Understand that the process finalizer, be it museum or something else, plays decisive role in shaping the entire working process.
- Remember that the philosophy of the museum institution has already changed due to the part you play in it and to the mission you have to fulfil.
- See museums as living and changing institutions.
- Understand the museum as only one of the many kindred institutions within the very same field and with the very same task. Learn to use them and their experiences.
- Your creative communicational play is not a "montage of attractions" done with museum objects only; the very museum institutions may become your objects.
  - Learn the art of dramatization, of setting up a theatre piece and of making a movie: your art is homologous to them.
- See museum presentation as para-artistic medium – an art in its own right; you will fight and be laughed at but the next generation will take it for granted.
- See yourself as a creative professional, the protagonist of the applied art of heritage communication.
  - Remember that the museum machine not only crawls but flies if driven with imagination.
- Be aware that the process of musealization also means entropy and that the long storage is a temporary death of museum objects. Therefore, give back to the life all you can and in the most effective distribution: through the information, participatory experience, museum shop, loan, recycling, changed behaviour towards heritage in revitalization of the needs and the know-how etc.
- Remember that all the objects came to the existence as equal: that is why their hierarchal treatment and presentation do not correspond to the complexity of life for which they stand.
- Remember that museums will always remain doubled with their dichotomy of collecting and presentation. This does not mean that either of the sides should win, but, as the conscience of the institution, you must make sure that the constructive fight never ceases.
- Remember that all heritage based institutions, museums specially, will have to remain doubled in nature: as theatres of facts on one side, and theatres of fiction on the other. Your task is to ensure the creative balance between the scientific and the spiritual experience. But the firm duality will mean that it remains a theatre.
- Don't you ever forget that you can do the right job only if you believe in the

mission of museums.

- Many have irresistible "arguments" to impose themselves as your masters: your only boss is your public, so that you are at least aware when committing a treason.
- Beware, that technology if seen (like the great guru of ours taught us) as your extensions, is there to make your voice louder, your eyes sharper, your memory larger, your movements far reaching, your mind smarter, your energy greater...
- Technology is ruthless and has no ethics, so do not become a destructive monster as your mission is love.
- If you do not dare to say it, keep constantly on your mind that you are making a part of the rescue team for the troubled Planet of ours: those who would laugh you out now will either join you or become quiet in a short while.
- Remember: "We only learn from those whom we love" (Goethe), but also "Si vis amari ama!" (you have to love if you wish to be loved).

## 5. Educational Role Of Art Museums

If any human relationship is giving and taking, there is absolutely no reason why museums and their users would be different. Taken in its best, education may fit to this scheme of generosity but it usually does not, whatever the claims there are. Besides, I like to believe that we are now much further than the enthusiasm of the sixties when there was this fascination with social role of museums so revelatory to the development of the professional self-esteem. Therefore one would like to build one's own scheme not borrowing it from the sector that includes so much social conditioning, regularity and institutionalism – like one finds in educational system. In brief, nothing in museums (which depend upon free choice and own ability of persuasiveness) can attain the methodological level of a true educational activity. Its values and risks should stay with those in charge of it.

Our job in art museums, to take one museum type, is clearly communication in its full meaning: necessarily two way and forcefully giving and taking, therefore an exchange. Unfortunately, all the right words about right things and doings are desperately spent, misused, usually by those who use them to cover either a bad conscience or inaptitude. Besides, how can one go much further than (like at the Sunday mess) expressing candidly his or hers good wishes, only to continue on Monday the harsh reality of old practices? In addition, some people are already tired of new old ideas of democratic participation in form of workshops, seminars, art classes etc. In most cases they are void of true sacrifice, the only thing that can guarantee true exchange. Many of those places are rather odd with their obedient population whose devotion makes them look like a benign set of ultimate bores, disciplined lay brothers. Like the followers of a sect or a political party. There's usually a stable pattern behind both sides are willing to follow, not the changing life and its needs. So, continuing the example of art museums, what should we do?

At the beginning there was art. The Paradise was so close that artists and consumers were the same group. As we grew up, this unity was split into the art and its lovers, enthusiasts. The invention of art museums made public possible: by that time the distance between art and its new, potential devotees (seeking for the initiation) was already too large to be overcome without an additional mechanism. Art museums took the position between art (artefacts, artists) and users of art, its consumers. While it was about past, the position seemed logical and necessary, as only museums could make such an accumulation of beauty and esthetic experience available to the population. The trouble arises certainly on the level how the museum performs such a mediating role. An art museum is, precisely, interfering into this relationship, so everything it does should be evaluated in this light: what does it collect, how is it studied and kept, how is it exposed and whose ideas about art and the mystery of human existence it conveys – and to whom, by the way? A still bigger trouble arises through another daring achievement of this world of art museums: the museum of contemporary art. Logically (one would claim) yet curiously, they appropriated the very same position as "past art" museums – in between what art is and what users are (as the ready public) or could be (as potential public). Any museum would some way or another condition the public, offer patterns of thinking and propose rules and systems of values. There, a historical distance gives the truth a fair chance of survival. Contemporary art museum, on the other hand, is a vivisectionist operating in a real time, mediating what is, this way or another, around us. Behaving thus as an alter ego of the public and the users at large, it takes the risk and the responsibility hardly any other type of museums (except military and war museums, though out of different reasons) would have. It becomes an institution, self contained, and strict in its

obeyance of scientific methodology and its organizational procedure. Deaccessioning is the same way impossible as in any fine art museum. This fact of eternal choices made in living situations makes their mediating situation not only inasmuch responsible and delicate (which role they may perform with angel's delicacy) but also declares them clearly opinion makers and trend setters, and – via facti – true creators of the history of art. Quite a frightening paradox, isn't it?

There I like to take up the idea of communication, but this time to question its capacity in contemporary art museums. The whole (new?) subject of communication in museums is taken up from the standpoint of the renewed social sensitivity and modern democratic tradition. Once brought into the museum milieu it somehow staggers and proves shallow, declarative and slow in progress. Reasons are not as obvious as one would wish. One of them sounds like a mere provocation: museum profession is still in a *status nascendi* and its performances are still fettered by this fact. The other one, linked very much to the one already proposed said is the lack of a sound, ripe theory of the cultural heritage (museum profession "lost" one hundred years fumbling with Museology). My claim is that the majority of our fellow curators does not truly understand the museum concept. They know the definition, though. As experts in their academic disciplines they are very knowledgeable but have little wisdom. I am just trying to say that hence nothing is wrong with social and democratic motives of museums, they cannot, however, be correctly realized if the sides of the communicational process are not properly defined. Users can communicate with the museum on the level of participation in running the museum institution (like was the case in true ecomuseums since the beginning of the seventies), participation in working process (like the work of volunteers in American museums) or through the evaluation of the museum action among them. That is basically all. The true communication, namely, can happen only if the museum leaves the usurped position of mediator between art and its consumers. Museums were born (and still are) out of the need to preserve what is dying, of the need to continue what should live, and desperate need to make people better and wiser through the selected experiences, whether distant or close in time. Well understood, they are added mechanisms: a museum is never generator (of culture or art) but amplifier and catalyzer, never material remnant of the culture but a pacemaker to its dying heart, never a player but a stage...

The redefined art museum does not stand for the missing *link between art and its consumers* but helps the connection to exist or to be established, and tries to maintain it vivid and productive. It may influence this relationship by helping both sides as it is democratic institution par excellence. Placed near but aside of this priority relationship, contemporary art museum enhances and makes possible the appreciation of art, encourages contact with art and artists, assists in independent actions in this respect, gives context, knowledge and orientation, offers assistance in evaluation etc. There, between art and its devotee (be it an apprentice or an expert, professional or layman) the communication may and should happen. The true ideal of contemporary art museum is not therefore the biggest and most exhaustive collection of contemporary artists (internationally, if possible), but a distant, idealistic dream of primordial Paradise Lost where all arts were still related, where artists were identical with users and where art was a way of living. In this respect, a contemporary art museum is a process and relationship, – institutionalized only as far as institution assures continuity, organization and learning from ones own experiences.

## 6. MUSEUMS AND THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE (TÄSTÄ TULEE UUSI)

A paper read at the ICOM-CECA Annual Conference in Jerusalem, Israel, 15–22 October 1991, the theme being The museum and the needs of people.

From what I have learned, and thanks to the organizers of this conference, I can testify that Israeli museum people work in a convoluted way: they kill animals and put their corpses in museums to show what they look like when alive, living animals they imprison in cages on life sentence; they grab paintings from homes and artists and hang them on the bare walls of empty houses, they pull sculptures out of their spaces and enclose them in cells; they dig up honest people's graves and expose their remains to the eyes of the mob. They worship the vicious goddess of vanity and they try to convince their public that the past was better and more important than the present. But, in a sense I feel at ease and very much at home.

A man survives a shipwreck. He wakes up on a distant shore in an unknown, maybe primitive, hostile land and gets very worried for his life. Going cautiously further inland, all of a sudden, he sees a man hanging from the gallows and says with obvious relief: "Thank God, I am in a civilized country."

Now let me see if you can survive thirty-five minutes of museology applied to the problem of people's needs. The shortest statement of the state of affairs would be like this: people do not know what they want, we do not know what they need, they don't know what they can expect from us, museums don't know how to switch from eternity to the present, nobody knows what to do with this sinking ship and everybody pretends that they're busy and that they're doing something about it.

Critical insistence upon the absoluteness of museums which usually placed them within the capacities of the 19th century was only a pledge for reform. However, nothing much has changed. Radicalism was only verbal and, in fact, *shallow*, as it did not anticipate the approaching system of the museums of the third wave. The professional community did not build an updated professional philosophy necessary for the redefinition of the museum's mission. Whether museum professionals or society as a whole should be blamed, the changes occur only on the physical, methodological and technical levels, without affecting the conceptual substance.

It has been rarely discussed, and that is the point I would like to affirm, that museum professionals are only one half of some hypothetical reformist agreement – our users have to be willing too. Yet often the grim truth is that they refuse our reform. It took us almost four hundred years to establish the museum tradition. During the process museums were trapped into the logic of their subject: the past is there not only to be studied and shown but also to be produced and sanctified. Our museums contain almost exclusively the grandest and most magnificent of persons and objects extracted, invented or created, but real only within the accepted museum idea. Most of the impact of museums on the public is successfully built upon the consistent identification and subsequent self-denial on the part of their users.

Believing in a public who is ever ready for our user-friendly innovation is misleading. The probability is that they would disregard it strongly. Our public is very much conditioned in favor of having glorious and prestigious museums. They do not perceive a museum as an institution which refers to their usable needs, deduced from banalities of their everyday lives.

They prefer to have a museum that radiates a feeling of security through the presentation of an impeccable past and through the unquestionable objectiveness of science. We know terribly well that both of these convictions are mere preconceptions and fallacies. Museology thus stems from our profession's guilt complex.

Therefore, museum people have a twofold task: to reform their institutions and to educate the public how to use them for their real benefit. As professionals we should be aware that an appalling lot of people do not understand how to use them. Evaluations of our programs too often show that we hardly get our message across. And yet, we are talking about museum-goers, about our public. What about the vast majority of others who have never thought of visiting us? Irony suggests with a grim smile that it is they who are our unachieved priority.

As you can see, defining "real benefit" is the solution, provided that both sides accept it. It seems, however, that most of the responsibility lies with us. The doubled task obviously demands a clear vision of the museum's mission alongside the cultivated ability to understand the visitors' needs. This is not as easy as it may seem and it leads to some further specialization within our profession. Those who are supposed to provide coherence, efficiency and continuity to the entire profession are called museologists, but as they are a rare species, it means that all of us working in museums will be partly museologists. Why am I explaining this to you? Because museum communicators must be very "museological" as they are closest to my definition of a museologist: a curator with the mind of a visitor. They must be able to achieve the creative coexistence of professional expertise and the uninhibited mind of a visitor. The result is a museum with real benefit.

What are the needs of your people (by "people" I would mean those that a particular museum is supposed to serve, i.e. a certain community)? Any sociological, economic or psychological theory can offer an analysis of needs. These may be of some help but it would be far better to know the particular community most thoroughly. A museum must possess a profound knowledge of all the subtleties that form the past and present of its culture. Awareness that reaches beyond the obvious means full acquaintance with the complex identity of that particular community. The task of museums is simply the continuation of that identity including its immanent forces of change. Museums do not create culture, they help it survive. They do not substitute for culture or dying traditions but act as added support structures preventing collapse and encouraging vital inner cohesion. Apart from this, not much more can be said on the general level.

Correctly done, all museums should be very different from one another. (That is why museology as normative discipline hadn't a chance.) No two communities are identical, so no two museums can be identical. Questionnaires about the needs of the people are apt to yield wrong results. The questions will be answered with some built-in misconceptions: your public is already inhibited; you can hardly get in touch with interested non-goers; neither group knows the potentials of your museum medium and most people just do not care. If you decide to forget all this, one problem of crucial importance remains: is your museum, the way it has been conceived, usable for any real benefit?

Imagine that your museum offers corrective cybernetic action instead of *highlights, treasures, masterpieces, riches and glories*. Could it (also) question the indisputable reality: Was Picasso fooling us? Is it art or just trash? Can your kid really do it? Sponsors or bosses? Who creates History of Art? – And so on. But could we imagine that our hidden masters would tolerate it? How would we serve the establishment then? All doors may be open (which does

seem very democratic) but all of us have some doors we never go through. A canvas that costs a museum twenty million dollars and another twenty million dollars earned yearly by a tennis star mock us all. This may be indicative of a certain lack of ethics in the States but it is probably utter moral decadence in, say, Bangladesh.

I would not label it differently if five years of a curator's time were spent in a natural history museum trying to collect and mount the last specimen of a rare bug. But is this far from being a mere mockery? Can you do anything about it? If the public only knew what and how to ask! If museum people could become fully aware that the truth is not composed of facts but of their interpretation! We are perfectly equipped to produce fascination. We can certainly make people better informed (though the question remains whether they really need that information). For some hundred years we thought that we could educate people in the sense of making them more knowledgeable. However, rarely has anybody in museums wanted to make people wiser and better, and that is what it is all about.

Ask yourself daily: is your museum a meeting place where ideas grow and help is obtained, or a marble necropolis where objects die?

The bureaucracy of any profession is hardly ever perceived from within itself. Its main characteristics in any institutional field are a fascination with its own structure of values and priorities, and the inability to understand any logic other than its own. In some cases professionals are just happy outsiders, but when linked to the power system they become dangerous manipulators. The total absence of community concern or some false input for the social game of democracy may not necessarily mean participation in the global plot of professionals against laymen (as some authors claim) but the effect is quite the same.

Therefore, I accept that *the time may be ripe for a fresh look at the question of whether museums can do the job themselves, or whether society must participate in museums in a new way*. As participation is a matter of effort on both sides, our colleague might have meant some sort of public pressure. Such strong feedback is not likely to come as it would mean the presence of abilities which the community at large does not possess. What will happen instead is that people will turn to those who offer a more attractive product, usually of disputable quality.

A museum is therefore created somewhere above and outside of its frame. Its bits are always created anew when that spiritual transfer takes place. The information gets its content by appropriating the shape and effectiveness of a message. From a non-existent reality, former reality, from the past, we create a virtual, physically non-existent yet present reality within the visitor's mind. Your museum object(s), your museum building provide only the physical substance of this transformation. Communication officers repeatedly turn it into a revelation. It is not my intention to support the idea of so-called education officers being necessary, because that would be only broaching the problem and, according to the nature of our civilization, leaving it there. My claim is that a museum *does not exist without them*; it is therefore a theater without actors, a temple without a priest.

If, roughly simplifying, an education officer is supposed to explain and insure that the implied expertise and knowledge is handed over to the visitor, the communication officer has a complex task. The difference is in the new responsibility. Museums are not saviors of the world but are certainly becoming one of the powerful mechanisms for that aim. Their task is neither "preserving the past" (which can even be counterproductive), nor "handing over our

inheritance to future generations" (which omits the obvious responsibility for the present ones), nor keeping "relics of our culture and our civilization" (what about the rest of the truth?), nor safeguarding "testimonies of the progress of human kind" (a questionable supposition as we started to detest our progress)...

I doubt that tomorrow's society will have much understanding of the creation of new, technologically and architecturally disguised old museums. A museum is a natural reaction to any endangered identity, be it local or national culture, wild animals, art collections or know-how. But, since society itself cannot figure it out, and our backward profession does not care enough, they violate the essence of the impulse and end up being prestigious cages for the trapped bad conscience. When new technologies and aggressive acculturation deluge some rural community, museum people usually react. They come and plunder the remnants, they shut it into their morgue and say: "Thank God we saved that culture from disappearing into oblivion." The morality of this simplified procedure is that you should fight the disappearance by building up the resistance of that endangered culture. But again, this means working with people and not with objects in the first place. In short, museums happen *there*, if they happen at all.

As Buckminster Fuller's "spaceship Earth" turns more and more into an overcrowded, shattered raft, dramatic as the one in Gericault's painting, we realize that there is no alternative but to offer security, consolation, compassion and some hope in the face of human despair. We are not the only mechanism but we have to do our part our way. We need a counteractive, cybernetic museum, a third wave museum that would reject the posture of literary man who, as Marshall McLuhan puts it, "*points with pride and views with alarm* while scrupulously ignoring what's going on". (Perlmutter, 1976)

The cybernetic museum is a tool whereby its community can understand inevitable change, and preserve the vital productive forces of its proper identity and local know-how. As a tool of rationalization and an analytical mechanism, it is also a ready support for resistance and corrective action

If a museum and its community mean to function in this way there would be a constant exchange of sympathetic reactions, a new quality worth trying, communication.

A museum? It is many things. It is what you are conditioned to think, it is the way you get to it, it is also your intimate expectation, it is certainly what the building, its entrance and design suggest... But, more than anything else, a museum is what is being done within it, and the people who make it all run. All of them are important, no doubt. Yet, those whom you see and experience directly are of greatest importance. If they are there at all, they make a museum for you – communication officers. If they do not have a clear, compact vision of the role of their museum (which is shared by most of them) there would be nothing to be transferred to their public. They are the magicians who perform the marvel which makes the dead talk and who enable objects to incarnate their creators and users. This spiritual seance which is the essence of the museum performance is not possible without their shrewd manipulation and illusionism. Only in their hands does a framed piece of canvas hanging on the wall become a window opened to our eternity. They are there to help us establish the fine communication with the experience that was coded into that particular expression. Here, knowledge helps. Too much knowledge may substitute for feelings, which is usually what happens.

"Your brother needs your help, but you meanwhile mumble your little prayers to God,

pretending not to see you brother's needs", said Erasmus. Could we admit, to begin with, in our art museums that the best art, the art of art is not closed into frames, hanging on walls or put onto pedestals? Which art gets closest to eternity? Kenneth Hudson claims that art museums are "backward children of the museum world". I doubt that many understand him. First of all, museums flourish and the media are crazy about them. Properly understood museums should help art get to the widest possible circle of people, but in the sense that art is accepted, appreciated, practiced – in short, that it becomes incorporated into life itself. If the mission of art is to enhance living and add decisive sense to it, then the museum should act as a mediator, an enzyme that helps the process.

The less obvious their presence is, the more honest their approach would be. People have forgotten that priests clad in gold and ornate silk who preach from sumptuous, glittering marble temples are not to be trusted. In a world governed by greed and prestige, even gods are denied relevance. There, by saying "our God" they actually mean "our Church" as in art museums (which so beautifully reveal the bureaucracy of the world of museums) when they say art, they probably mean "the art we have created". A church cannot create a god; it can probably serve it.

This is why I am still appalled by the ready consent of the global museum population to the last General Conference on ICOM's theme "Museums as generators of culture". Does one have to be a new museologist, an intolerant reformer or an outsider to see how fundamentally wrong is the direction in which we are sailing? My opposition was not heard; Kenneth Hudson will create himself still more new adversaries and art museums will continue their active role in creating the history of art. This scenario of the expansionist misconception of the role of institutions is omnipresent in the museum world.

I wonder if our profession could grow sufficiently aware of its own mission to see that we are the only ones who could change things. Soothed by some prestige and shallow declarations of how important we are, we have become (were we ever really different?) a defeated profession where managers, architects, designers, politicians and sponsors are realizing their ambitions.

You may feel correctly that museum communication has not been mentioned for some time now; this is the mere frustration of a museologist who tries to grasp the very core of our ineptitude. It is my firm conviction that any correct solution begins with correct analysis and understanding of the problem. So far, founded as it has been upon false ambitions, museology could not offer usable answers which would overcome the logic of institutionalism.

If museum communicators were one day to become at least the equals of the scientific and managerial personnel of museums (which is the minimum that I would accept), we might weigh in with some changes lower down where options taken have decisive effects on the "upper" levels of museum functioning. Museologists and museum communicators would join in proposing new forms of cumulative functioning for museums. The logic of multidisciplinary, integrated, transdisciplinary presentation will be an enormous new field of innovation. Heritage media centers in unpredictable variety will, in some cases, relieve museums from this rather populist or in any case communicational obligation. A positive future for anything (and why would museums be different?) has always been seen as freedom tolerant of variety.

Successful museum communication starts before it really takes place, by offering a

meaningful, friendly museum, custom tailored and designed to suit the specific circumstances. When the public needs a place that would inspire devotion and respect for nature, we give them instead either a concentration camp for animals or a morgue where killed and stuffed creatures stare at us with their plastic eyes. When the public needs a museum of sound, we give them a museum of musical instruments. When the public would like a place where one could feel the sense of wonder in the process of artistic creation, it is given a deserted whitewashed sanatorium where works of art are squashed against the wall by perfect eye-piercing space ship lighting. When the public wants a museum showing its historic origins they are given a three-dimensional handbook designed for students of archaeology. If the community could make use of a museum to understand the world of technology, it is given the testimonials to technology's triumph over humans and nature. When a certain culture dies we put its dead body in a museum and say: "Thank God we have saved it for posterity."

A museum communicator, aware of all this, is by definition a frustrated unhappy professional. Devoted to their mission and prepared for daily self-sacrifice (that's their fate), they find themselves with almost useless tools in their hands. During their training, what they need is some sound philosophy of collective memory and accumulated human experience. What they are given is a set of managerial and technical skills. Once again, knowledge instead of wisdom.

A museum is a pizza of many arts and skills. After some two centuries of existence we may have reached the point where they can be recognized in their specificity: especially when it comes to presentation. Like any endangered species, humans are developing a new curiosity and a new understanding which could help them to a satisfactory survival. Cultural entropy requires counteraction, which results in the explosion of museums. If their scientific basis is indisputable, on the level of presentation technologies and the quest for their efficiency, the institution of the museum is becoming a new compound medium. The new theoretical frame suggests the existence of a specific field of heritage media where museums play their part. In speaking about media, we necessarily have communication in mind.

McLuhan's prophecies did not severely damage the immanent conservatism of museums. They still avoid life and, now using technological disguises, they try hard to be informative. Messages leading to changed behavior are far from prevalent. The whole concept of museum education was, and still is, meant for the transfer of knowledge. In that appropriated task museums can hardly compete with schools. They need a higher aim: wisdom.

The difference, according to Ji-Fun Tuan, would be in the juxtaposition of complexity. Information is horizontal, knowledge is structured and hierarchical, and wisdom is organic and flexible. As to the transfer of wisdom, according to the same author, it depends upon individual chemistry and fine osmosis. (Cleveland, 1983)

What could be more appropriate for museums than the transfer of wisdom? They deal with the accumulated experience that emerges as the result of a process of selection. Any selection is already a message, a result of an inevitably complex and integrated approach, a deduced and filtered knowledge, a wisdom. Museums are not a reproductive medium with written music; they have to extract tomes and tunes from the cacophony of the past (and present), put them into clear voices and give them understandable form and syntax. Science is there to assure that nothing is a mere invention. All else is the zone of creativity. The museum has no ethical choice but to accept the role of *alter idem* for its community.

A modern, communicational museum must be like R. Lepage's stage pieces: "a computer programmed technological orgy" with the participation of objects, images and light. Museum presentation will always remain doubled in nature, being at the same time a theater of facts (science) and a theater of fiction (art). In the interaction, through participation and collaboration, a new para-artistic medium of heritage communication is formed.

This awesome vision of a reformist does not deny traditional museums the right to exist but rather claims that new museums should be new. "You need to spark the imagination and the intelligence of the spectators. Make them listen attentively. Help them participate. And most of that is given indirectly, through hints, by the way of constructing a scene" (Lepage, 1989). As Ernesto Sabato has said in an interview, "for a human being learning means taking part, discovering and inventing".

We are not talking about an extravagance because "thriving on chaos" seems to be a legitimate feature of the new civilisational syntagm of "post-humanism" in which we redefine our place in nature. After centuries of futile triumphalism we are returning to the intuitive conception of nature which is the way to the true understanding. "Why did some lineages survive while most perished?", asks Stephen J. Gould, the great Harvard paleontologist. – "The obvious answer, but one which most people instinctively resist, is that they were lucky." He adds: "Evolution seems to work by chance, not progress." (Adler, 1989)

Creativity is always welcome, but for museum communicators it is a "condition sine qua non" as their applied art of communication comprises talent and strong vocation. The paralysing conviction that science allows limited interpretation becomes more of an excuse than a real obstacle as the most exact sciences denounce their own rigid rules. Let me interpret what Niels Bohr has said: "When it is about atoms, the language can be used only as in poetry. A poet is not that much keen to define facts as to create images." (Cole, 1988/89)

You will be justified if you accuse me of avoiding very difficult questions of actual practice. This is not on purpose: time is limited. But it is also a matter of priorities as I see them. My fascination with museums goes beyond the physical fact of the institution. The museum is a profound need and for the last two centuries this need has materialized in the museum as institution. Only that is certain. As the museum is a concept, an idea, a mental necessity, a subtle survival mechanism, it may one day take a physical shape other than the present museum as institution. If you ask me (and maybe you won't) this change is already underway. I admit that even I am not sure whether will it have much of the present firm structure. In the vision of the "total museum" which is an intentional abstraction, the fulfillment of its mission would mean its disappearance.

What is important therefore is its processual and conceptual substance of which an ever increasing portion will belong to communication with its users. Until that future, let me paraphrase Plato by saying that the better the museums in the state, the better the state.

## NOTES

1. Perlmutter, Martin. 1976. TV and the inner eye. (Videoscope, vol. 1, no 1, 1976, pp. 6,7).
2. Cleveland, Harlan. 1983. Informacija kao prirodno dobro. Pregled 223.
3. An interview with Robert Lepage in "Montreal Mirror", October 27,

no 2, 1989.

4. Adler, Jerry. 1989. Were you lucky to be there? Newsweek, Nov. 1989.

5. Cole, K.C. Edvard Viten i fizika buducnosti. Pregled, No. 244, 1988/89.

## 7. From Interpretation To Communication

### Heritage institutions in the life of community

Observing is neutral, detached, aloof: it makes the utopia of so called scientific objectivity possible. It is an easy position in the mainstream of development which does not rub against the banks of reality. The entire history of museum institution (which is not the same as history of museum idea) is that of observing and being present without making part. Museums were always obedient tools in the hands of their conceptual and true owners i.e. preponderant forces of the society. They reflect and appropriate the dominant value systems and philosophy that drives the self perpetuation of the class of the conquerors. It is easy to recognize these rulers to which museums, among the array of other (even more important) institutions, form the soft matter. They possess power and make decisions about the past. Then museums are used to put it into practice.

The reactions to this obvious servility were many and occurred from the very beginning of the museum history. Yet, their quantity and quality were weak so that the liberation, both conceptual and fiscal, is yet to come for the majority of museum institutions. But, museums are not alone for some decades already (or were they ever alone?). The museum idea, i.e. the idea of preserving the past, is being shared by many other institutions. This is why educating, interpreting and communicating might make a lot of difference in defining the job and for whom it is performed.

Some twenty years ago, the ambitions of educative output seemed rightfully innovative and welcome, as the world of museums was all absorbed in the ambition of education. I have tried elsewhere<sup>1</sup> to deal with the futility of the task. Neither museums nor the similar institutions could develop any regularity, compulsiveness and standardization necessary to become educationally relevant, i.e. reaching beyond the education as by product. Heritage Interpretation International (HII) was one of the most ambitious projects of filling the widening gap between the public and the heritage based institutions<sup>2</sup>. It offered a strategic framework which denounced severely the collection-cum-presentation concept of traditional museums. The problem, the idea, came into the focus and the rest was means. Then the problem was interpreted and the message emitted. In this respect, however, interpretation was only an active, variant of traditional approach, a decisive move demonstrating that mere presentation lacked resolute intention of rendering the information content of the object (whatever it might be) to the public. Yet, when it appeared, this global (!) initiative was a gush of the fresh air, as it ment a strong demonstration against professional isolationism, towards the unity of all that share the same working method. It did not go, however, much further towards scientific implications of this important breakthrough<sup>3</sup>. HII was non-institutional, almost a private initiative which was never seen as a part of a larger scheme that could help recognition and affirmation of it. Thus, it remained a concept which was poorly exploited in the time when international professional community needed its message desperately. ICOM (International Council of Museums), associated to UNESCO in the status of NGO, enjoyed ever since its safe protection and its institutional recognition. UNESCO is a password to any administration willing to support activities of ICOM's members. But ICOM, like UNESCO, does not give value for money, revealing by its inefficiency, its affiliation to the international establishment. The difference in status between HII and ICOM tells much about the nature of the world and obstacles any innovation encounters.

Due to these circumstances and the reluctance of (frustrated) world of heritage institutions,

the pluridisciplinarity of participants and multidisciplinary of their common denominator (interpretation!), HII was slow in accomplishing its mission. It might be, that it was also weak enough, to build a structure and philosophy which would stretch the fame more successfully. Anyhow, this is how interpretation came into the focus of heritage professionals and raised some hopes for a prosperous future. As one might suppose, interpretation is being re-discovered often, specially in the world of museums, as it presents a phase in redefining the job done in heritage based institutions.

Interpretation is many things, all of them serious, if we take the world seriously. We use it to set forth the meaning of some objects or sets of objects, or a complex whole, like urban or natural environment. By interpreting we explain, go into the meritum of things and explicate, – we elucidate the hidden meaning. By interpreting we oppose automatic process of self determination of the meaning in dependence of the circumstances, be it outside or inner ones – pertaining to the experience, character, prejudices, preconceptions or assumptions of the public. Therefore we construe and make understand in particular way: to make it successful we are ready to perform and execute to demonstrate what otherwise would not become obvious; we use any method to render what we find is the meaning we ought to transfer to the interlocutor. Whatever we would like to interpret has its own semiotics and is coded in a specific mixture of sensory directions. Therefore, whenever we interpret we also translate. The obstacles to understanding are many: sometimes it can be a cognitive dissonance (an often case in the strange environments of museums), but more often it is the barrier of the language. The past, or even any present that we wish to know the temporal dimension of, is a foreign language to the non-initiated. Since we need the exchange (between the specialties) and understanding (among the laity), we offer our expertise of interpreting, the same way many others do (journalists, teachers, writers, poets...) and yet differently as we are obliged on two sides of our discourse: what we say has to be effective, understandable and scientifically approved.

Since its creation which was itself late, HII could hardly adjust to changed circumstances and change towards more ambitious approach. It would be extremely delicate work to satisfy all the professional interests that are attracted by the idea that the main thing about heritage is not, say, a collection, but the effort to make it speak; they range from scientists to commercial tourist interpreters and cover the panorama of curators, organizers of cultural events, natural heritage interpreters, tourist guides, consultants, informatic engineers and restorers. Most of them either feel abandoned and badly cared for by their traditional organizations, others are trying to sell themselves and their ideas and search for new ideas and methods. A rather motley army.

I believe most would have a problem with any claim for common theory or, god forbid, common mega-profession<sup>4</sup>. Having a mission to accomplish makes utter sense of certain existence and activity. Mission means ideology, organization and rules. Interpretation is such a big concept that attracts many, as already explained. They bring specificity of method, of approach and that of their customer – even different goals. Indeed, all of them can share the methodology of interpretation as common strategic approach. Many professions can create a megaprofession consisting of all those who nowadays work in heritage based or heritage concerned institutions.

Mega-profession is not a cosy invention of an idle museologist. Once there in some regular, recognizable, normative way it can speak to be heard and impose to accomplish what it is after. Its ideology will necessarily be there ready to be exploited, opposed and disputed (all

one needs to reach the quality position). Will it be called Heritology<sup>5</sup> or Mnemosophy<sup>6</sup> or anything else remains always the matter of some convention and consensus. We shall build a broad basis of reflection upon the phenomenon of heritage. That will give arguments for the future of the profession(s), give them mission determination, and make us serve our clients well. This is the only framework that can guarantee the position from which the destiny of heritage and profit of its users can be handled, improved, guaranteed. But if we leave the problem of the common theory – which most would fervently oppose, anyhow – there stays more practical matter to deal with.

Is interpretation enough any more? I believe not. No serious profession can allow itself a luxury to stay out of the matter it deals with. So far museums were immersed into the past and became, indeed, passeist and conservative. In the last twenty years their domain moved towards the present. They were forced to admit, like any other institution (be it from the heritage sector or not), that there is nothing like absolute truth or scientific objectivity, and hardly anything in the myth of originality. They influence and change by the very fact of their activity. They can serve neither past nor the future people, but those around them. Therefore, they cannot and should not avoid the risk of participation in the real time. This means responsibility and the re-invention of ethics. Whether we by a stolen object or could we deaccess it becomes the matter of correct conduct, but true ethical dilemma is what past we collect and care for, whose ideas we follow, what messages we propose, whom do we admit as our bosses, who conditions how the finances we need and, finally, do we have the idealist goal. In these questions which are most difficult to any profession, lays the secret of troubles and comforts. In this direction we could find the redefinition which would bring us to the quality<sup>7</sup>. The concept of interpretation was not forcing these dilemma into our discussions. That is why most of the professionals feel disappointed when, instead of endless discussions on perfecting methods and technologies, they are offered this frustration.

If we cannot avoid the active participation in the world around our institutions, in the communities we are supposed to serve, then we ought to admit our inaptitude of helping people in achieving better quality of living. Interpretation is not even ment to deal with life problems of the community(-ies), of our users, possible or expected. Communication is (yet another spent word – but, love is also, and justice too). Interpretation is giving while communication is also the exchange. Communication is giving what one needs, once the wishes and the needs are known and appreciated. If interpretation is saying that the process of explaining is important, communication says that it is the user, the client who is important. So, like any public service, museums and other heritage institutions, are trying actively to indicate the needs which they can fulfill and realize. The needs and requirements of the users can be known only if there is a constant analysis of the world around them, of their proper community. They can be known also by a keen ear upon what the user expresses as opinion or request. The feedback is what makes communication a two way process. Placing the gravity centre of their existence upon the customer means breaking all the barriers of traditional professionalism. It opens up the constant process of redefinition of professional performance as the institution has to react quickly and appropriately to the changing reality around. It allows and calls for participation (in programming and in activity itself). Communication means that the institution is not placed between the past and the user who profits from its accumulated human experience, but added aside only to enable the fruitful contact and make possible the continuation of generative codes. These codes assure coherent, harmonious and balanced development. The institution that communicates, extracts from the past, learns from it, researches its values only to pump them instantly back to life and living people. Museums were invented when the rate of change made the natural processes of sublimating the past

impossible.

Heritage institutions are too young to claim finiteness of their model. The world is using its institutions and procedures towards survival in the increasing sophistication of their working technology. There are no safe domains: all is permitted in astonishing combinations of competencies. All goes pro-active. No art should stay confined to its traditional limits. An excellent marketing will not sustain from advising you upon the quality of the product to be marketed, therefore entering the problems of technology, economy, design etc. We cannot talk about past not knowing what effect we want to produce upon the present. Present deals with the quality of living, so, presumably, we will wish to add ourselves to the collective endeavour. It is engineering, but what has remained untouched by human intervention? We live in a constructed, invented world, like none that existed before and we transform it into a controlled organism, - whether we like the fact or not. The whole megasystem that suffers from seemingly fatal entropic disease, due to the lack of quality, is turning into a cybernetic mechanism. Many professions will "oversee" their ethical obligation to partake in the steering of the system, but we should not. Past has always been the most natural way of bringing quality to our decisions and our ways of understanding the world. It contains most of what we need as guiding experience, only we have to interpret it correctly and see that our interpretation serves real life solutions. Since we cannot do it without constant exchange of information, without full understanding of the needs of our clients (even when they are not sure how to formulate their frustration or fear), we should, indeed, call our method by the name of communication. This pro-active way goes very much against the expectations of the predominant forces of any society. Therefore, it will comprise a parallel strive for an autonomous status. This approach means that communication is always after its own perfecting also by trying to include ever more users. It measures its success by attracting more and more of those who, otherwise, would never set a foot in the temples of "their" culture and "their" privileged knowledge. Communication is sharing, imparting, coming together, some form of appearing congregationalism of sensitive and responsible people. Interpretation may solely exist upon the capacity of explicating scientific truths. Communication, in addition, comprises and stresses ethical choice and the responsibility (for the fate of the world, be it a small community or a nation). It means the risk (and joy) of creative act. And it builds hope.

## Notes

1. Šola, Tomislav. 1987. From Education to Communication. ICOM News, Vol. 40, 3/4, 1987.
2. The initiatives to create HII go back to 1983 when Society to Promote the First World Congress on Heritage Presentation and Interpretation (CHIP) was founded in Banff, Alberta, Canada. The First World Congress of Heritage Interpretation International (HII) was held in 1985 in Banff. The second took place in Warwick, England in 1988 and the third in Barcelona in 1995.
3. HII published for a short time the magazine "Heritage Communicator" (started in 1987), later on renamed into "HII – Heritage Interpretation International News (1992).
4. Šola, Tomislav. 1994. Museum Generalists - New professionals in the Age of Synthesis. Museum Management and Curatorship, No.13, 1994, p. 61–65.
5. A term first used in 1982.
6. A term first used in 1985.
7. Pirsig, Robert M. 1992. Lila - An Inquiry into Morals. Corgi Books, London.

## IV MUSEUMS AND CURATORSHIP

1. Museum professionals – the endangered species
2. Museums and curatorship – the role of theory
3. New professionals in the age of synthesis
4. Museum Ethics and Museology

### **1. MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS - THE ENDANGERED SPECIES (TÄMÄ MUUTTUU)**

When I was a curator, some people (though sincere enough) would ask me: "What on earth are you doing all days long in your museum?" Most of them have learned that we do exhibitions, although they wonder why it takes so long to do one. That was misunderstanding on the part of our users. Recently I have put myself in a situation that I have to say: "I am a museologist and I lecture on it at the University." It is a happy circumstance if they catch "musicology" instead, they just think that I am not good enough as a musician to play an instrument correctly. Most museum professionals do know, however, that museology has nothing to do with music, but they think museology is some kind of fiddling anyhow. This misunderstanding certainly comes from sections of our profession.

To tell you the truth, I often claim in the international museological community, to the utter astonishment of my brothers and sisters, that museology does not exist. But do not applaud if you are a hard-working practitioner, a pragmatist who denies anything like theory and who never learned the Russell's joke about pragmatism. I suppose you do know the joke - it says "Pragmatism is like a warm bath - it is getting warmer and warmer so imperceptibly that you are never quite sure when to scream." I am exposing myself to criticism of misunderstanding both orthodoxy and fundamentalism, and hence of heresy: our "religio curatoris" is still non-existent because we worship the wrong god - because the basic principles are still not clearly and firmly there.

But let us say briefly why do we suddenly talk about museology. If it is not just another trendy "scientism", why is it that we are taught that our job cannot be done any more without undergraduate or postgraduate museological training? What is it about our jobs that has changed so much? In short indeed, everything. Museums have such a paradoxical situation: they were founded upon the wish to document the past to keep it as a productive experience, though instead of serving the present they serve the very same past as a continuation of it. This way, in a highly conditioned environment, they were expected to act as a secure shelter from the "third wave civilization" that is sweeping away many "eternal" values.

The drama of constant change that produces another "great anxiety era", as Irwin Toffler would put it, grew into a deluge, so who is sure about anything any more. I only hope that our theories are not in fact some hasty prayers offered to an unknown god. Anyhow, museums resisted change as even they misunderstood the nature of the only eternity that is given to humans.

I will not risk getting myself an attribute of a "catastrophologist", but instead I ought to offer you some minutes of silence to contemplate the poor state of our world. I am sure you know all the alarming data, but if you look at it, framed only by the limits of your own existence and, alas, by your own institution, you are right to get mad at all greens, not to mention that terrible creature, the "green" museologist. But it is certainly not only greenery and what lives in it that we are talking about. If five hundred animal species a year disappear from this planet

for ever (which is true), how many human cultures are exterminated and how many are being prostituted and devoured by expansive acculturation?

Now, why do I mix museums with this process? I always feel sorry that Orwell did not say anything about museums, because they really are part of this process. - They are used and manipulated, they obey their bosses, and because they are, for the most part, like them: being concerned with power, profit and conquest.

What we are talking about, especially when it is about some critical analysis, is that prevailing, dominant nineteenth-century museum model, now very often disguised within its modern buildings and heaps of modern technology. The museum concept is a derivation of the ruling power structure because of its conditions and its public on one side and its curators on the other. Knowing how many new museums appear weekly or even daily in the world, we surely cannot not speak about the crisis of quantity. But there is a serious crisis of institutional identity and a crisis of concept. It is true that museums do correspond well with the shadowy side of human nature as well. However, extremely modern in historical terms - existing some two hundred odd years at the most in their present form - museums are so well planted in society that they receive surprisingly little criticism. If they are sunk so deeply in the sin of possession and that of material values, how can they represent the spirit? When they try hard they do so by trying to compete with reality itself. Reality is dry sand in a fist: the firmer the grip, the more fugitive and elusive it becomes. But museums are not able to get rid of the cult of the three-dimensional object and its representativeness. Museums are about ideas and concepts and the methods to achieve their purposes are necessarily many.

But we are in a ridiculous situation in many ways anyhow. We ask people to memorize - that is what we teach them in schools - but we invest millions to teach machines to think creatively. Why should it, therefore, surprise anybody to realize that museums are desperately trying to make their map out of reality as Frans Schouten has said, quoting Lewis Carroll: the map of reality on the scale of a mile to a mile? It appears to me sometimes that we as harmless patients are allowed to play this absurd game in the courtyard of this madhouse of our world, guided by an insane arbiter. Our teams are divided into, probably, some Movable Objects, Buildings, Pictures, Papers 1, Papers 2, Plants, Free animals, Imprisoned Animals, Killed Animals, Tools, Vehicles, Utensils, Performers... those exposed to the rain and those under the roof. The rules say that we all play the game at the same time. There is only one goal and this is circular in shape: the playground is not limited.

You can just imagine what an effort it costs our museum public to make some sense and joy out of it. As our research shows, they are as mad as we are, but since they are conditioned to our crazy game from their childhood, they cannot afford to behave like Malraux's Indians that bring fresh tubers to their idols in Mexico's Museo de Antropologia or like the bonzas in Bangkok that visit museums to praise their gods there. Even our nuns find it, alas, inappropriate to cross themselves in front of Lippi's Madonna when they see it in our museums.

Besides, putting museums at the centre of the heritage - still the prevailing spiritual pattern - puts us in comparison to astronomy in some Ptolemaic era with the Earth at the centre of the universe. We in museums still need our Copernicus to write for us a paper, which would probably be named "de Revolutionibus Orbium Hereditatum", establishing a system of heritage care in which the heritage itself would be at the centre, and with museum institution as just one among equal planets around. Only then we would need in turn our Kepler and our Newton to finish the discovery.

The big lie of our museums is incurable unless they cease to claim eternity, immortality and infinity. They should know better than anybody else how inconstant and unstable everything physical is. What do they think in the conservation laboratories, as they cure dying objects, about the nature of things and people? If the right to die is guaranteed to people, should not

objects have the same privilege? Or, if this is too provocative, do they think that the canvas from which they destroy a square millimetre of paint for the sake of scientific analysis will indeed endure forever? How far into the future and at what cost? Can that cost be ethically justifiable?

Are there boundaries to the keeping things alive by constant restorations? Many museums already look like intensive care hospital departments, and I fear we shall soon install instruments that will clearly show to what extent the vibration from visitor's choices shortens the life of museum objects.

Life is birth and death in constant exchange, both of them justified and necessary. That short-term fear of death, if we continue to express it and demonstrate it in our museums the way we do, will bring only frivolity, affliction and frustration. Saul Bellow gave an interview recently to one of our journalists in Yugoslavia and said: "Fear of death is distorting us while we deny it. During this process we are desperately trying to achieve immortality we shall really be always in great trouble."

In the space between the two doubled infinities, that of physics (which is atom and universe) and that of spirit (which is individual conscience and spiritual system of universe), we are trying to attain eternity. We do it in our temples of vanity: quite a touching human ambition, but hardly acceptable within the concept of historical time, and ridiculous in terms of absolute.

If an orchestra fails you cannot blame the concert hall: it is always musicians, sometimes the conductor and rarely acoustics. If a museum fails it is, in most cases, because curators got it wrong. Industrial civilization is inclined to value quantity as often as quality. It has invented the man of action, and the good curator is supposed to be of that breed, with big collections, huge museums, unique values, crowds of visitors and activities under any condition. But the future and its developments will reaffirm the importance of that contemplative man among curators as well as among the public. The curator will have difficulty in finding the proper balance between these two extremes.

Museum curators share very much the destiny of other European intellectuals. They find themselves rather useless in the world that lives by different rules. While they are praying in their museum temples, the chivalry of modern professions is thundering outside their doors in growing crescendo. It may easily be a battle, judging by the noise, but that is how they fight for their future. Subdued by the "fetishism of speciality" - again a typical intellectual disease - they do not venture into things and situations that are not of their concern. The obligation is, as we should know, just the contrary.

And one thing more, known though to all and everybody: Even in the UK which can be regarded as very advanced in theory and practice of museum work, more than a half of junior professional curatorial staff have entered museums without any previous formal museum-orientated training, sitting next to Nellie, as Patrick Boylan calls it - the method of learning the job used in the textile industry a hundred years ago, if I am not wrong.

Next I would like to say some words on something which I have entitled "The Search for Resonance".

The taxonomic division of knowledge, growing specialities, conquering and laborious spirit and ideals of quantity and speed made us, European barbarians and their descendants, the rulers of the world. But the victorious alley is leading nowhere: there is a solid wall of an opposing logic built into the triumphal arch. We will *not* pass through it.

Museums, and not only them, were (and still are) parts of the puzzle that nobody ever made to fit. We have been analysing the world for some centuries and as our needs are finding their way through the barriers, we perceive that the time of synthesis has come. We need clear vision, panoramic view, synoptic insight, and a wholistic approach - we need to answer this time again the questions, who are we, where we are from and where are we going. If you say

this to a museum curator with all his practical worries on his mind, he would call you an irresponsible and unoriginal poet. The lack of professional theory is one reason, while the other is the professional solitude: his message is still formed at the level of his professional speciality; he does not see much further from his institution and that is the point of defeat or the point of departure for some reforming thoughts.

In a museologist's collection of definitions you find such a diversity of attempts to define the museum institution that one should know immediately that something is, besides being wrong, going on: except for the traditional museum institution all other similar forms become evasive. Among the existing definitions the best are those that are the longest and that are the most poetical in their attempt. The truth is, we do not know any more what a museum institution is. This fact may drive legislators crazy and traditional curators unhappy but it should be faced. All the former limits are blurred, all the boundaries with adjacent areas are insecure or crossed already.

Museums do have libraries but libraries started to behave like museums, making exhibitions and establishing educational services. The same happens with archives. Ecomuseums opened the curatorial fortress from within. Georges-Henri Rivière, helped by others, played the role of Ulysses: no category of museum working process was left as it was. I have heard and seen curators trying to close the Pandora's box of ecomuseums, claiming that we have nothing but a version of the old "*heimat*" museums, as they also ignored parallel changes that were happening in the last twenty to thirty years. Now we can speak easily about museums without objects, about museums of the future, that some forms of irregular heritage action have a museum character. The third wave civilization is giving birth - though a long and dramatically delayed one - to the "third wave museums".

As a profession we are still under formation and the least we can do for our future is to be aware of the processes that we are either part of or witnesses to. Wiser than ever we shall let things happen, we shall analyse the processes and try to get ahead of it, for the first time in the history of our profession. This will serve as a measure of our survival ability, of our fitness (as naturalists would put it) to adapt and to continue. So, what is going on? What are the novelties widening that area of ours beyond recognizable features?

I have a little list to propose to you, though it is very abbreviated compared with my full list:

- New, custom-tailored, museums, such as the fourth generation of ecomuseums;
- exhibition centres (changing, temporary, museums);
- science centres (museums without objects);
- "entertainment enterprises" - as they described it in some articles - very much heritage-based;
- heritage industry facilities, like Beamish or theme parks;
- museums of the future (Futuroscope, Epcot);
- new, big national museums, which are still being created;
- synthesized museums;
- new heritage-concerned organizations;

and still more things:

- the tendency of convergence in the cultural and commercial sector;
- cultural investment to encourage development and economic growth;
- the tendency to conceptualization;
- cultural marketing that leads to individualization of

institutions and respective image making;  
the tendency to integrative processes of the institutional sector;  
growth of the complementary sector (such as museum centres, documentation centres, orientation centres, services, travelling exhibition centres, etc.);  
the tendency towards integrated preservation;  
the tendency towards preservation *in situ*;  
the tendency towards integration in information sciences;  
the tendency towards total interpretation and communication;  
the tendency towards the planned and studied usage of technology;  
the tendency towards multidisciplinary, direct and creative uses of museums, with the curator being only the focal point on which the activities are based.

There is also a growing tendency of inevitable change in all museum institutions, but this pressure is often just a swing from one extreme to another. And, there is no sound, authoritative theory that can guide these processes. What we need is to change incrementally in a dual process of creating new, different museum professionals and new and different museum institutions.

Twenty years ago McLuhan was telling us all this, announcing the changes by his, so rarely understood, syntagma: "The medium is the message"; or what even Romans in their way certainly would say: "Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis." The current problems of our profession, therefore, is due to the fact that we did not change together with the times. And we should have known better. We have had our prophets, our pioneering institutions, our innovative precedents: we had everything. Why has it happened that the museum boom of the early seventies still leaves us unprepared? Since then, the number of museums in the UK, for instance, has nearly doubled. Some two or three decades ago we should have recognized and prepared for the creation of new types of museums concerned with technology, transport, social and industrial history and not least art. We should have done it differently but our profession was conditioned by the past models in the very same way as our public. The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, to give one example, was doing exhibitions of the "commercial" nature already in 1920. John Cotton Dana knew, seventy years ago, more of our future, I can assure you, than most of us do still today.

As the growing number of museums is not a guarantee of their monopolistic position, the increasing number of curators working in them does not guarantee the continuation of their professional identity either. If you just take the issue of the obvious shifts from institution to action, from product to process, from object to information, concept and idea, from education to communication - it may appear to you that we are facing professional transformation, as though we had allowed ourselves the luxury of hibernating the curatorial larva when it should have emerged as an interesting butterfly quite long ago.

Scientific and professional concepts always improved and progressed every time when seemingly different phenomena would, in the end, emerge as just different aspects of the same thing. That is true for physics, to take one example, but it should also be true for the entire configuration of heritage care. When in physics the field was widened to infinity, it only required the search for the common area of resonances. At the wave length that all are able to receive we shall have the emission of collective experience happening.

One of the best but also very impractical definitions of a museum institution comes from Georges-Henri Rivière - a page long and of an excellent literary quality. It compares very well

with the relativity that Niels Bohr, to continue this parallel, allowed for physics: "When it is about atoms, we can use language only the way it is used in poetry. It is not that crucial to a poet to define facts as to create images." I have, nevertheless, tried to define this common area of heritage resonances, going as far as possible in provoking disagreement. The museum, therefore, is any creative effort of cybernetic action upon the basis of complex experience of heritage.

Now for some few words about emerging theory, and, as I named it, on how to help the future happen.

Trying to argue that our profession, together with the philosophy of it is in a great transition, I often draw parallels from other areas of human interests. Don't you think, for instance, that our museums are functioning somewhat like medieval Dominican monasteries? There is a pressure, as I have mentioned in some other occasions, that we all become poor Franciscans, just taking care of our own existence and going out to the people. This is true if you analyse the example of ecomuseums or neighbourhood museums but it is true even if we speak generally about the finances. Our bosses demand that we live from begging, using donors and sponsors and so on, or from our own garden, which is actually our museum shop. There is nothing bad in that, provided that our mission is flourishing and our religion devoutly practised. But so far we are in a worse position than the fourteenth-century Catholic Church was with all its Popes and schisms. We have some canon law and liturgical rules (i.e. museography and that we ambitiously call museology), but we do not have "religio curatoris", some theology of ours - I use the parallel rather freely!

Whether our god is the museum object or the museum itself, it is still a Golden Calf - nothing else. Imagine how far we are from the protestant congregationalism that some expect from us. We have some considerable epiphanic messages but we still lack our bible. We are a different profession with its substantial mission but yet in the "status nascendi". It will be formed out of the area of resonances where the informatics will make possible the final appearance of that science of ours. Formed upon a phenomenon and not upon an institution our science has got a right to claim that status. It would be some kind of philosophy of heritage, some "love for wisdom" (as its basic meaning suggests), that would be a systematic research of basic principles, laws and categories of reality, that of the character of identity and continuation of it, as well as of complex relation of man to his environment. This may function as a usable "theology", shall we say, to establish our multifaceted relations with the heritage. Putting it in a centre of our professional "Weltanschauung" - our professional philosophy - we are opening our windows wide: we are attaining the conceptual level not necessarily linked with physical and three-dimensional. Any considerable religion, if we still accept this parallel, has allowed different liturgies and local languages. As to our language - if physics, as the mother of many sciences, has been forced to use metaphor whenever dealing with the unknown, we may also use it.

Whenever I dealt with theory I always understood that my task is of some counteractive nature, that I have to expose myself to a risk so as to be able to contribute. Proposing this science seven years ago I announced it by the provocative name of "heritology". Since then, I had the pleasure of counting those who have stopped laughing at me. I continued to play with conventions, naming it this time "mnemosophy" and signalling that it is actually new contents that we are after, not the name. Again, resisting the poet that we all hide in our bosoms, I have tried to set up the shortest possible definition of that science of ours that I call simply the cybernetic philosophy of heritage. As the common goal of the entire area of heritage care is not knowledge but wisdom and as it represents a system to be guided independently, I find those points actually hit home.

The main task of our theory is to force us into radical questioning of standpoints and the insistence upon the confrontation of the collective experience and present needs. Its method

must also be of some problem-solving approach so that it is able to bring the feeling, intuition and knowledge of how to form and run the institution according to inner and outer circumstances. Serving as a mental opening, this theory should teach us the philosophy of our profession, teach us the future of it, enable the effective transfer of professional experience, teach us creatively to help us react in every new situation, and to give arguments supporting our professional self-respect and self-appreciation.

If applied to inner working processes, it should help the homogenization of the staff, it should give advice, instruction, support, impulse and serve as a basis of professional strategy. As the philosophy of our professions, it should provide us with criticism, it should serve as a constructive interpreter of them and finally, it is expected to research the future of them.

Whether we speak about the single profession of heritage care, which I would strongly support, or several professions, the idea is that our vehicle gets finally its headlights.

So far as the professional training is concerned, which I cannot venture into very much this time, I see already some Trojan horses being wheeled in - heritage interpretation and concepts like that one, for instance, that I know very well at Zagreb University being good examples.

Now we are approaching the end of my time, so I will say a few words about future professionals.

The brave prophet, Jules Verne, expected television to happen only in the twenty-ninth century. He was thinking logically but according to his own time. It is like breaking the sound barrier in aviation - aerodynamics change, optics changes, logic is different. As we in our profession seem to be breaking the very same limits of our dreams already, nothing seems to be too brave to foresee. The curious thing is that museum professionals have their minds dragged behind their actual practice. That also explains why we have to analyse institutions in order to make assertions concerning their professional staffs. The entire heritage care field may soon be facing these developments. Allow me the liberty to offer another list which, I think, really needs several more pages:

- Museums as the measure of their own environment;
- identity centres;
- a network of total museum units;
- heritage orientation centres (as a missing first information circle);
- regional, national and international heritage information networks;
- regional and national heritage media centres;
- territorial (and/or national) stores of heritage objects;
- heritage data banks;
- heritage action *in situ* - supporting and amplifying living traditions;
- inclusion and treatment of heritage data and objects that are kept outside institutionalized care;
- the claim of museums and kindred institutions for independent status (much like that of universities).

Future shifts will be profound and numerous as we shall be facing the future without clear patterns and obvious rules. Besides art, in the usual sense, art museums (for instance) will contain technology, applied arts, performing arts - transforming themselves into "cultural happening areas" or centres for creative communication.

As all this will happen due to an invested effort, it is logical to assume that all this will not be done by some traditional museum curator. One should be careful to avoid a vision of a future

professional as some kind of supernatural being, a temptation that hardly any profession can resist. Driving a car is a serious business but running a metaphorical machine, like a museum, may require an alert spiritual eye, some feeling for commands and performances and - I should I cry it out - love. There is, however, one qualification much more important - talent. When it is about creative communication, science is very much approaching art.

I will take the liberty of giving you one little parallel. As I say, our job is so much linked with art, especially the communications part and indeed, if you analyse both, you may see this. They have the same art and museum communication, the same source of inspiration, the same starting point, and that's the concept of identity. They have the same capacity which is really creativity. They have the same goal, the same aim, communication, and they use the same method, that is interpretation.

Conservation and communication are quite opposed, "fundamentally different" functions of museums, a dramatic dichotomy across the entire heritage area. A future professional will have to be able to bridge the wide span of the differences. The interpreter/communicator will have to be able to understand the researcher and vice versa. But the latent disunity will cause permanent breaches of the sector: this destiny we cannot avoid but we have to adjust to.

Curators are necessarily a breed of wide concern, "witnesses of truth or injustice but neither of nation nor of a class, but justice for all times and all places" - as Bernard Henri Levy would describe the class of intellectuals. They are not there to join the effort of preponderant forces of society - just the contrary. Curators and other kindred professionals are necessarily reconsidering usual concepts and given truths. When John Cotton Dana was speculating about his "committed" sort of museum in his booklet *Plan for New Museums* in 1920 he said that it would be necessary "to engage persons whose opinions of what a museum should be are quite loosely held, and whose susceptibility to new ideas and powers of initiation are quite marked". It is therefore a susceptibility towards the environment but also constant re-examination of what their own is and what they have to fulfill.

In connection with this broad task, Alma Wittlin was, as always, beautifully clear, claiming that we must not allow "man to remain in his present state of spiritual and emotional incompetence with regard to human affairs - to the control of his own mind and human relationships". This huge task for museums and the like is asking for more than plain knowledge, meaning that it should be used to make a collage of information - a montage of spiritual attractions that resembles the art of cinema. Curators, or simply heritage carers, are supposed to widen the concept of their profession by the obvious circumstances, following thus the widening of definition of institutions and that of theory. In the past confused curators have given away their true role to architects, designers and insensitive managers, abusing thus their vocational commitment and showing an apparent lack of aptitude. Reprogramming their professional standards and acquiring a responsive professional philosophy will gain them an indispensable vitality.

As a dignified part of a broad heritage preservation profession museum curators, although somewhat changed, will continue their existence. We have to offer to the endangered museum curator a compact basis for feeling secure as well as to the others from the field. Somewhat poetically, their transformation will cover the span from technicians of prestige to the priests of wisdom. That new breed (or at least new variety) able to cover and spread over the fruitful differences of the dramatic field of collective experience, from researchers to communicators, may one day be recognized as a profession of heritage engineers - a big and prosperous profession. Their education will be always an appropriate mixture of their basic academic discipline, of museography (or archives work or librarianship, etc.), of general theory and information science. Their final product will aspire to a status of an applied art of heritage communication. Their long travel started from Vanity and will end in Wisdom: Then, they will search for the only Eternity that is actually given to us - that of human kind.



## **2. MUSEUMS AND CURATORSHIP:**

### **the role of theory** TÄMÄ MUUTTUU

As a profession, we always deal with survival in all its qualities: the genetic task of any entity, be it energy, physical bodies or ideas, is to continue. This does not only concern the object of our expertise, but also the profession itself (Šola, 1989). So, whether we rationalize it or not, express it clearly, or admit it tacitly, we talk about the future of our profession whenever we talk about breaking new ground. The very term "future" is not necessarily mentioned at all. What has not been clearly established is the double nature of the point of departure. One part is the analysis of the contemporary world, which we always have to mirror, and the second part is the state of our own art. Our experience is scattered like our ranks, but to speak about the future of our institutions and of our profession poses the fundamental question: where are we? It becomes important to analyse again our professional past; we are in search of our proper identity. Our heads are still in the past, our working methods already belong to the future, and our present state is frustration. I do not trust the professional concern of those who are neither exploring new ways nor suffering that feeling of certain inaptitude to cope with the problems of this world. They have been caught by an ostrich syndrome and present nothing but museum bureaucracy. They keep themselves busy by chasing their own tails - a metaphor, rude maybe, but true.

We have started our greatest adventure as humankind, some travel of final adolescence, a painful transformation from one form into another. It is the end of the historic cultures that endured for some six thousand years. The starting catharsis was probably the First World War, and then we entered the era of great uncertainty. The "change" is the word that we were forced to place where, for ages, with different definitions, we had "eternity". The place in our master plan of strategy, that we readily assigned to our civilizational phalange and its "progress", will be replaced by the creative insight, and, once more, by the imagination. The key problem to our future is bridging the gap between technology and humanities. (The human dimension of any age is reflected well in the way its technology is used.) But the task should be a challenging one, so much more as today technology is the best and the most sophisticated tool we could ever imagine in our hands. For centuries we have passed time in the body-building parlour, now we should give our brains the same attention.

A quarter of a century ago M.McLuhan prophetically exclaimed: "Time has ceased and space has vanished. We now live in a global village...simultaneous happening" (McLuhan and Quentin, 1967:63). Time has indeed shrunk: creating and evaluating history coincides. The whole world is only fax distance. And, more of the kind is still to happen. The technology forces us to grow up. Some ten odd years ago, in the late 1970s, the global village's museum seemed to take its first contours: TV, video, computers and telecommunications were joining into new hybrid forms like telematics. Now we have camcorders, HDTV, 3DTV and telematics in use - even telematic museum networks - we have optic fibres and laser discs, approaching holography. A twelve-inch laser disc can store 54,000 photographic images per side whereas 3 1/2-inch CD-ROM can contain 270,000 text pages recorded, and all ready for instant retrieval. Mankind is like a schoolboy in a roadster, able to drive, but lacking experience and apt to take no responsibility.

But the museums profession has still kept an aura of nobility and aloofness. Had it not been for good manners, people would ask us more often: what on earth are you doing whole days long in your museum? - It must be still another invention of those with money and power! And, frankly, we know well how many would deserve an answer: nothing much, really. For some of my colleagues (internationally speaking), I see museums as god-given shelters where the fragile polymath can peacefully enjoy the divine pleasure of being useless. Instead of

entering the everyday life, fighting for their mission, they split into two frustrated groups: one of "disappointed intellectuals" (as E.H.Lévy calls European intellectuals) and the other of technocrats whose new science is statistics. With the latter as the natural traitors, the museum mission is given over to the preponderant forces of society. Thus, it becomes possible to say that the news about museums is good and bad: the good news is that they grow like mushrooms indeed, and the bad news is that much of that quantity is not inedible. At least not in the sense that we would like to call the healthy food for this world.

Some colleagues of ours would consider the role of "moral guardian" extending "pastoral and evangelical care" to visitors should be strange to museum curators (Horie, 1986). But, I would say that there is nothing wrong with that "priesthood" if we redefine the God and set our "church" free from any bosses. As a profession we are still not an active agent in the world's processes: our prevailing posture is one of non-commitment. It gives us the wrong impression of independence. We brought ourselves to the position of public servants lacking their proper philosophy. We have been aware for quite some time that the Pharaoh's scribe was part of the repressive social mechanism - not a neutral position. I often meet those colleagues who are quick to claim their non-commitment in this sinful society of ours. At the same time they are unable to define themselves: "a curator is someone who carries curatorial responsibilities" (Horie, 1986). I presume that, by the same logic, curatorial responsibilities are defined as those carried out by the curator.

Contrary of what is usually believed, curators are (still) part of the conquering phalanx which brought this world to where we find it now. They are not independent and they are not in the possession of the truth. But the time is changing and we should be changing accordingly. Curators have always analysed and explored the world, but the problem now is how to keep it productive and continuing without hitting the wall. The dead end street we are driving down looks like an easy sliding highway with a soft sunset at the horizon: a metaphor for the sweet death. We have reached the time of the big synthesis of new synergistic methods, which, unlike the former, serve the objectives of survival.

As a whole, museums are in crisis. Their continuing specialization was not matched by the parallel process of cumulative functioning. The museum body has been, from the very beginning, contaminated with the viruses of ownership and specialization. Taxonomical analysis found its sound support in science. The use of microscope or telescope is still preferred to the mere observation as the latter is seemingly unscientific (again a terrible misuse, claiming the method for the content). The same logic results also in notorious lack of co-operation between museums, whereas the possibilities of transsectorial co-operation (upon the same domains of heritage) was not discussed at all. Maybe the implied consequences were puzzling, as obviously they would require serious changes: widening and redefinition of the profession(s), the development of information (requiring centralization and decentralization in parallel), common storage areas, co-ordinated action, common services network, network of integrated units and so on (Šola, 1989).

Some ten years ago I thought that museums should be more than disseminators of knowledge. Their more appropriate task should be to develop awareness. Their passive nature should be turned into active by reaching to a level of conscience. But we are not alone in taking our part of responsibility: Vaclav Havel has said that he would like "the theatre to be the voice, the conscience of the people and of the society" (Yugoslav TV, February 1990). Happy theatres! It was like that during the quiet revolution in Czechoslovakia: theatres took over even the function of the public information system and made the dream come true. Why is it we cannot imagine museums accomplishing the same? They possess the arguments, the "real evidence", "material remains" of the processes; they have the collective experience and the material to demonstrate it! But something is terribly wrong with them, and it is obvious.

Museums are not supposed to be creators of the world and its future, but play a role as a

corrective mechanism. They are wise and eloquent, aren't they? As to the colleagues who hide behind the scientific non-commitment (which I would call irresponsibility), they admit involvement by claiming that they are "generators of culture".<sup>1</sup> What an impertinence, lack of self-insight and self-awareness! They are not there to generate culture but to care and make live, make continue and influence. So, instead of a neutral notion of curator as guardian who, in practice, serves the establishment I would advocate that curator becomes more a defensor et tutor (defender and carer). We have to help the forces of identities, from art to nature, to keep functioning and to keep their inner logic of development and change. It may seem an idealist view of museum mission, but one should not forget that museums are just a part of the entire system of the self-defence mechanisms of our body of civilization. Museums and the museums profession are just one branch of a grand but disorganized army.

Within the logic of post-historical society, museums have to act simultaneously with the needs of time. The twin Utopian fantasies, the myth of progress and the myth of revolution, are replaced by the struggle for survival. The immediate consequence of the fear of disappearance is the revival of past. It is like reinforcing the anchor in the storm to build up credibility and self-assurance - something businessmen engage in with the display of portraits of the former company owners on the walls, and the little gallery of the family portraits on their desk. The same logic has spread museum institutions over so many areas of interest and created so many museum-like institutional forms of dealing with the past that tension exits. We either deny these new institutions the right of calling themselves "museums", or we generously give them the right to join the growing family, but without capitalizing any of the new quality. For the time being, the area in question covers all the variety from scientific institutions to the theme and leisure parks, from closed to open spaces, from movable to immovable objects, from dead objects to living beings. Since the methods are relatively limited in variations we witness The Great Convergence of the institutional sector of heritage care. By saying "heritage" we don't speak about museums only.

What we talk about is obviously a matter of analysing the current processes. The only possible conclusion on the general level would be that we are indeed witnessing the process of mingling of what were once separated fields. The boundaries between them are blurred and the new complexity gives good reasons for speculation: what will be coming out of this melting of professions? If we do expect a new quality then all those basic professions, museum curators included, are just there for a certain while - not that anybody will disappear, but it makes a difference if they are part of a bigger profession. Besides, the rethinking of their identity suggests further changes as far as their professional philosophy is concerned. So, we need a new theory. Once with the changed mind, they will be able to change their institutions and the entire role of their wider profession may be so redefined that it becomes vital for the development forces of the society.

Within the technological context (to which museums own their genesis) museums will find the formula of their final level of institutional development. They have to serve this world in its entire complexity, because they belong to the set of counteractive mechanisms of adaptation and rationalization: they are out of the number of the contemporary society glands producing survival secretion. Museums have to act within the totality of human interests and concerns, being, together with archives and libraries, in charge of preservation and use of the collective experience. We are approaching the time when the "third value" museums will reach such forms of new synthesis that will mark the appearance of the total museum (Šola, 1985).

Lagging behind the development of the very world we are supposed to serve does not mean the real danger of extinction for our profession (although the fear is there). But clearly it may result in museums falling behind some new forms of heritage care, as a result of which they can rightly feel desperately obsolete. To the contrary of what is claimed, our profession is not

in its final stage of definition but at the beginning of it. The profession as the chimney sweep will never disappear (as the world will always have chimneys left for them), but it would do itself good by turning to some similar problems of the contemporary technologies.

Museum collections are a mere physical substance of the wisdom for which they stand. And that is where our strength is. Wisdom is neither knowledge, nor the information potential, or just a collective experience: it is sublimated, a spiritual product with all these components and still something more; it is an ability to offer contemplation and advice, at least by the condensed profile of selected experience. The wisdom is always respected and there we have a guarantee of our existence. So, the wisdom is not taken here as a metaphor but as a result of a working process in museums. Without this approach we shall continue having fabulous collections composed of individual objects: something like well written sentences, in the incomplete chapters of an unpublished book.

A lot of our colleagues are feeling uneasy about the very word "change" as it is too much in use. This distortion of the primary reformist message is a normal side effect, but acts like a noise in emission. The metanoia that will help us to survive does not mean and cannot mean the desertion of the former rules and values. When brought to bear on the traditional scene, it means adjustment here and there, because it refers mainly to present and future practices. It is a sad thing to see that some dear old museums are trying to change themselves into nonchalant meeting places: a death in Venice! For those the "change" is an invitation to adjustment and not an obligation (some museums should be protected monuments themselves). The "change" means conditio sine qua non for the new institutions, so that they should not be born old.

The same logic, I would say, applies to the the professionals. Speaking about my difficulties, I must admit that I would rather leave the term "museum" and all other terms to the mere pragmatism of describing (the diminishing) differences within the heritage care/institutional configuration. Therefore, I would try to follow terminologically the birth of the new amalgamated profession of heritage care:

species - heritage care unit;

variety - museum, library, archive.

A definition should be able to encompass the entire phenomenological field and stay open and anticipatory for the inevitable development. The **heritage care unit** is any regular, organized action exercised upon the field of heritage, meant for the transfer of the complex human experience. It is both diachronous and synchronous with time, covering the span of the past, present and future, according to the specific needs and circumstances of the given community. Contemplative and cybernetic in its effects, it serves to satisfy the constant human need of widening the experiences. It serves as a virtual set of extensions to the human senses, as an amplifier to the human capacity of comprehension and sensibility, and as a tool to act for the wise, harmonious development in the given environment. It implies the use of collecting, research, care and communication, as a whole or partly, of the complex variety of information in the form of integrated, specific working process. In short, I do not believe that art of some pan-artistic medium as heritage action, can be defined in few lines.

The new profession of heritage engineering, of heritage care or of heritage communication, needs new protagonists: teachers and disciples. The metanoia of our profession will be a quick but gradual process which will change the strategy of it from its fundamentals: heritage care institutions will, like social glands, pump in the secretion of collective wisdom; the mission will be accomplished through the constant institutional self-denial; what is outside of museums will be more important for them than what is in them; heritage care institutions must be independent, autonomous public service which, and that is admittedly a McLuhanism, will

influence the world by its proper changes.

The logic of the information era is a Trojan horse that the conservative curators took for the cheerful gift of gods and thus, by their misunderstanding, the new logic was wheeled in. It says that anything that can be brought together, synthesized or associated to form a productive, creative meaning will be its legitimate consequence. As this goes not only for information but for institutions themselves, many would recognize in it the monster of centralization. But it is just one position in the necessary pulsation that engages the centre(s) and periphery of the system in the constant exchange.

Some malicious curators claim that museology is not a science. But, that is not true: museology does not exist at all. Museums and related institutions need some theory which would not repeat the fatal mistake of museology: it is impossible to found a scientific, theoretical endeavour on the basis of one sole institution. It is, therefore, the inevitable obligation of finding and defining the phenomenological area. This can only correspond to the institutional aims as defined in the museum's stated mission. But, all of a sudden the Pandora's box is opened and what we see in it is a new little universe where the sun of the total heritage sheds its light upon the institutional planets of heritage care. An interesting sight indeed - as Ptolemaic phase of museum institution existence risks to be changed for the Copernican; a great shift, indeed, but we still need our Kepler and Newton to finalize the discovery. But who could wish for more than, finally, to play the role of an Einstein who turned it all again into the mystery...

A theory stemming from this I would like to regard as the cybernetic philosophy of heritage,<sup>2</sup> common in its general part to all the professionals working in the field of the heritage care.

Long ago, I called it heritology<sup>3</sup> and it was laughed at. Now, when it starts to be appropriated, I have something else along the line, **mnemosophy**, again just for the sake of provocation.

Mnemosophy stands for the central problem of the theory which is the phenomenon of memory (what, how, for whom, why, etc) and for the prevailing quality resulting from the working process - wisdom. Since nobody ever is going to take museography from museums, the broad level of such a general theory may not be too wide for the institutional inspiration of museum to be recognized as specific. Besides, the marvel of information technology already within the fortress colours the future as transphenomenological, transdisciplinary, transinstitutional and transsectorial. What was called conceptualization within the working process of contemporary museums, now starts to refer to the very idea of the museum, influencing thus its institutional configuration, its outreach and philosophy.

But, "good ol' museums" will always be there, just like we shall always have some "good ol' chimneys" left. Confronted with the future our duty is to train our apprentices in a way which would enable them to play a decisive role in the new developments of the world around them. We find ourselves in quite a curious point of development as a profession, discovering, all of a sudden, that we are not a profession at all: the majority of museum curators are never trained for the working process in which they take part. It gives some strange pleasure, however, to be a grown up and yet be able to choose one's name. Museology, as a science of museums, has been impossible for at least hundred years already, whereas Museum Studies sounds somehow too protestant. Maybe **heritage studies** could successfully cover that need for an opened theoretical system in which both challenges of our profession, that of theory and the one of practice, could be successfully realized.

Museums are very late with their changes. The reasons are: the myth of a revolutionary change as endangering the identity of the sector; lack of professional training as transfer of positive experiences (an anachronistic defect denying the entire profession); and introspective character of the profession itself due to tradition and exclusive orientation to the past rather than the present. Constantly running behind schedule causes losses in the competition with other media and allows more space and opportunity to the heritage industry. Caught between

science and show business the majority of museums behave like Buridan's donkey: starving out of hesitation. Neither of the two solutions is correct as they either betray the public or science, so the right decision is in choosing both - scientific showbiz. It may look awkward but it fits perfectly well the dichotomy of museum institution. Practice shows it clearly, but faced with the need to project and reproduce the profession, we have to make it part of the theoretical body which will accelerate our professional development.

The greatest financial magnates were never trained economists, hardly any football player of international class ever passed theoretical training for the game and no famous writer was ever trained in the writing of novels. No great curator passed any theoretical training for the profession. But we are not talking about the individuals of great passion and outstanding talent. What we have to have in our mind is the army of followers who are the only real wheel of transformation. The only way to deal with this aggravating circumstance is the obligatory training of museum staff, but with such a choice of experiences that they would be able to start fundamental changes in our profession. The theory will finally help the future happen. We need self-assured, proud curators, aware of their wide professional identity; they have to possess a good knowledge of the heritage care idea and the clear idea, and sensibility, of the processes that the contemporary world is undergoing. They must be very aware of the needs of the public and understand their own profession as necessarily a creative one. Trained in information technology, they should have a favourable attitude towards all integrated and concerted action within the field of heritage care, seeing their institutions only as the basis of this action.

The general theory "x" if possible in the suggested broad context should function as the transferable accumulation of professional philosophy and practical experiences. The working process of museums and kindred institutions is nowadays an elaborated scheme, a theatre where parts to play are, or should be, divided. All have to be aware of the piece being played and all have to contribute. I would like to see that three main actors, the researcher, the collection manager and the communication officer, receive different cocktails of the same ingredients. On the other hand - keeping the same line of comparison - the theory of heritage care profession, together with its museum part, is necessarily like pizza for many sciences and many practices. Exaggeration? No. You just have a closer look at your own museum.

As the new ground is being broken here and there, there is, I believe, a growing concern that we do it all of the time, in the proper way and soon enough. I'm sure the future is on our side, but time is not.

## Endnotes

1. The 15th conference of ICOM, held in The Hague in 1989 was arranged under the title "Museums: Generators of Culture".
2. Unpublished lecture given by the author at a symposium called "What is Museology?", held at the University of Umeå, Sweden, 12-14 April 1988.
3. Unpublished paper "A contribution to a possible definition of museology", given by the author at an ICOFIM symposium on "Systematics and Interdisciplinarity in Museology", Paris, 1982.

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### 3. NEW PROFESSIONALS IN THE AGE OF SYNTHESIS TÄMÄ MUUTTUU

Generally speaking the parameters of cultural production are the same as those which apply in the much favoured sphere of material production. The ambitions are the same (to produce more, to achieve higher quality, to "customize" the product in response to the growing variety of requirements); the methods, too, are increasingly the same (self-contained technological process, understanding of the market laws and user needs, persuasion/public relations, image building/individualization of approach, organization of production, marketing, etc.); and finally, the goals are also the same (seeking to achieve individuality, effectiveness, superior inventiveness - in short, to be different and more successful). As things stand now, the analytical tools at our disposal are ill-suited and not easily applied to the complex relationships among elements which we find in what goes by the name of cultural life. Cultural institutions - and these are what we most frequently have in mind when discussing culture - are easier to analyse, but the totality of culture is a continuous and constantly changing process. Moreover, this is the process that makes legitimate use of the variable of creativity. This fact, one might justly claim, makes any analysis that much more difficult, but also more interesting. (One might perhaps say that culture, acting to counterbalance the parallel civilizational processes, is in a way also a critique of these processes. A critique of culture thus becomes the meta-critique of material culture - "condemned" itself to taking a creative risk.)

Twenty years ago all talk was about multidisciplinary, but that grand vision was soon reduced to a renewed awareness of interdependence of disciplines. The conservatives who felt happy

in the splendid isolation of their individual disciplines were again able to dismiss the whole thing as "just another passing fad". However, following the quantitative phase, multidisciplinary began to produce the first fruits of the metanoia which it had initiated. In a time confronting us with eschatological alternatives - the time that B.H.Levy might call the time of defeated intellectuals - a new generation of *brazen* people appeared, simultaneous thinkers and practitioners, unburdened by the theory of their own appearance: they appeared as a posthistorical fact and as forerunners of all those unforeseen generations that will follow. In a time which is conscious, as it proceeds, of its simultaneity and identity with its own history, the creation and evaluation of events is almost simultaneous. (We have not become much wiser, but we do perhaps understand now that any judgement is exposed to influences that change it and replace it over time. Our acceptance of processuality as the true nature of all things has fruitfully confirmed the truths encapsulated in the view that "only change is constant", which is itself as old as our civilization.)

Today, as is only logical, the idea of multidisciplinary is still current, but is increasingly taken to mean joint and coordinated action, transdisciplinary effort and an obligation to engage in a fruitful co-operation of different disciplines, so that together they can produce results that would otherwise necessarily remain outside of the reach of any one of them on its own. The vision that this process follows, in its increasingly confident manifestations, is characterized by synopticalness, simultaneity, holism, comprehensiveness. Some things and phenomena reach the level of usefulness only when a comprehensive insight is achieved, in one place, through a synchronized analytical effort of the necessary number of scientific systems, and with a deliberate "mixture" of approaches, such as are suited to the nature of the object or phenomenon under study and to the intended use of the newly acquired experience. In order to assert "organization" and "vision" as parameters of a particular cultural system, it is first necessary to recognize and justify this freedom of movement between scientific

disciplines and to identify its protagonists, protecting them from the opposition and misunderstanding that they inevitably encounter as representatives of a different kind of scientific effort. It is probably most important to prove that they are not a freak phenomenon but rather precursors of things to come: they may be seen as a brazen generation today, but tomorrow they will be agents of wider forms of culture, and the day after tomorrow they will act as the human substance of new creative amalgams in the cultural sphere.

We are faced, evidently, with a new breed of "generalists" who will be accused of ignorance and superficiality by intolerant specialists. The generalists' creed is efficiency, purposefulness, well-defined users and clear effects; and while their method is, of course, multidisciplinary through abstraction, generalization, simplification, popularization, their goal is creative communication. The new generalists have emerged as the conscience of individual disciplines: they object to the exclusiveness of narrow professionalism. They are concerned about the fate of our planet and they do not shrink from grand visions and big words. They are aware that there is nobody but us who can realize the idea of salvation (however it may be interpreted in some circles) and that there will be no other place to make up for what we omit to do here. The new generalists are at present still underground guerillas, the seeds of a future army of common sense, who realize that neither religion nor ideology, nor individual scientific disciplines, can provide usable answers to mankind's fundamental frustrations and anxieties.

The new generalists (and they are to be found in every discipline, mostly as potential "traitors" and "vulgarizers") have a duty that superficial progressists will always denounce: to argue persistently for "organization" as the necessary precondition of any integral attempt. In this they will clash with the neo-romantic visions of individualism, which do not oblige anybody to participate in any form of collective action.

Many animosities and fears still survive from the time of the fight against large ideologically-founded systems in the service

of the state, and the concept of "decentralization" is still the rallying call for many people.

However, the misunderstanding is due to the oversimplification of that formula: such people forget the "backwardness of the public sector", which causes a significant lag in terms of everything that nowadays goes under the name of forces of progress. The information society is postmodern and

posthistorical. It has its own vital forces and its own nature,

so different from all the societies that preceded it - and, fortunately - so well analysed: the medium is indeed the message, today more than ever before. The information society projects its logic onto the entire configuration of contemporary development. Innovations in culture, which come first among the developmental priorities (and investments in culture not infrequently precede economic investments), are just early intimations of the future integration processes which are expected to integrate the cultural sector into all developmental processes and to ensure the simultaneous operation of both channels of development. In this effort on the part of the cultural sector to catch up with the other forces of development the main role will have to be played by generalists. It is their task to restore the overall integrity of individual disciplines and to forge alliances that will transcend the narrow parochial interests of particular professions. (In order to do this, they will need to reformulate the professional objectives of every discipline, to redefine its mission, and to bring it into line with the needs of the world. This means that they will open the discipline to the world, but equally that they will open the world to the discipline.) Within each discipline and field, as well as within the cultural sector as a whole, careful analysis and restructuring will be needed to establish such a parallelogram of forces that will lead to clear results. The humanist view of culture needs at least to be reasserted today, although, in all probability, it will require redefinition (at least in so far as its products and efficiency are concerned).

Insistence on compact organization and efficiency evokes tragic historical memories. This historical experience has inspired a caution which, at least when matched against the logic of the information age, appears paralysing and therefore counterproductive. Information science is both the maker and the child of its time and as such has learned to live with paradoxes unknown to the traditional disciplines. With the collapse of the myth of revolution there collapsed also the logic which ascribed to social phenomena the existence of the beginning and an end. We have now reached the end of the linear development which recognized regular alternations of states of mind and an orderly sinusoidal curve of action and reaction. In addition to the need to represent development on a three-dimensional diagram, it is also necessary to add extra components of simultaneous events. The information era stresses the simultaneous occurrence of centralization and decentralization, with the former serving as a precondition for the latter. One can at least speak of a synchronous flow of two sinusoids, which, at any given point in time, occupy the opposing positions of the greatest amplitude. Both centralization and decentralization presuppose the existence of a system, that is, a form of organization within which they take place. This system - irrespective of the cultural sector concerned - has so far been professionally viewed (and favoured) as either centralized or decentralized, but the point is that it should be both at the same time. It is in the nature of information society to aim for higher forms of order and to respect certain fundamental principles relevant for the production of both material goods and information. In order to compress information to the maximum, it is necessary to introduce appropriate technologies as well as such forms of processing that will make possible quick searches and widest possible distribution. For the whole process to function at all, it is important to pay the greatest possible attention to standardization and decision-making, as any improvisation and autonomous action within the information system is in direct opposition (as far as collective interests and functions of the system as such are concerned) to the existence of an integrated whole.

The centralized organization of a system ordered in accordance with the logic of information processing makes possible forms of collective multidisciplinary action of a given sector that would otherwise remain impossible or wholly improvised. Organization makes for a cumulative effect of such a multidisciplinary whole, enabling all its compatible resources to work together, forming a powerful and dominant resultant which demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of joint action without obliging them to all imaginable forms of unity. Essentially, what we have here is an analytical problem of finding areas of resonance and common-denominator values among related institutions and phenomenologically compact fields. Such an analysis inevitably points to areas of common interest, from where the road to motivation is, if not short, at least obvious and well-traced.

In a situation when individual disciplines or professions, baffled by the feverish rhythm of change, turn in on themselves under the excuse of applying scientific rigour, their vision is necessarily constrained by narrow interests which, I believe, go counter to the interests of the discipline or profession itself. In the apotheosis of institutionalism which still prevails on the world scene, little room is left for alternative approaches. Institutions are like black holes in the cultural galaxies and their only chance, however paradoxical it may sound, lies in continuous de-institutionalization: institutions approach life to the extent that they get away from themselves. Since this is but a rare spectacle, it needs to be stressed that no sector fragmented into a multiplicity of institutions (some prefer to call this the achievement of decentralization) can have a visionary perception of its own destiny. An atomized sector possesses no compact theory as a sublimation of the experiences of the whole profession, let alone a projection of its own development. Even the very setting of such an objective (though it is logical to ask who will initiate it) probably represents an attempt at formulating a theory, or, where necessary, at starting preliminary

research. That is why the call for a vision is at the same time the call for a theory. A compact and homogeneous vision scares the democratic mind with the kind of historical memories mentioned earlier, and it is important to stress, therefore, that the vision charting the future must be seen as opening a dynamic speculative field which does not prescribe the future but merely makes it possible to grasp its possible dimensions. After all, cultural institutions and sectors, too, are on their own not when they prescribe but when they offer the necessary arguments for analysis and agreement of all the interested parties. What the obligation to strive for a usable professional vision implies is the kind of organization that will provide a new institutional base for such research and a new form of cumulative ambition to rationalize the existing frustrations. Institutions are indeed necessary - but understood as means or tools of development and as part of the process.

All this, the organization and the vision, from the analytical to the communicative stage, necessitates the action of a new breed of professionals - generalists. Their brazenness is the result of their feeling of being threatened, just as their rejection by the traditional professions is the cause of their frustrations and insecurity. They should be given a chance to act, if for no other reason than to counterbalance the existing Establishment of superspecialists.

There is another reason why it pays to support the brazen generalists in their criticism of specialization and their efforts to achieve a synthesis. However improbable this may seem, they are the true carriers of the genetic code of every proud profession (though, admittedly, I have yet to meet a group that does not regard itself as such, at least in their heart of hearts). They do not feel defeated as intellectuals, and with their own creativity and understanding of the profession and its context they seek to "subject" all the other professions to their own goals. They do not lack that honest aggressiveness which raises the living tensions of the social being and brings to life all the creative fields of culture. Moreover, and this would probably require a more detailed elaboration, the new generalists have little faith in institutions, but they show a great deal of faith in hard work. The search for truth, which is the purpose of everything that we do (isn't it?), does not stop at the boundaries of the institutional system: in fact, the instinct of discovery most frequently leads the new generalists to seek truth outside that system.

The new generalists (I call them new because of the new context, and I single them out because of the possible existence of the critical mass that brings in a new quality) do not belong to any particular political orientation, but they could be roughly placed in the humanistically oriented, creative left of centre. They are a generation of stateless persons in science. They identify themselves only with their free scientific and exploratory interests and their predominantly counteractive effort. This gives a cybernetic character to their efforts and necessarily places them in opposition to the prevailing trends. Like their teaching, the new generalists are destined to play a corrective role in the social community. Though their mission may appear general to the point of non-existence of any mission at all, their implied role in development is growing. In the past, generally speaking, science has been gauged in terms of its reach, in terms of the perfection and depth of its probes. But when the legitimate measures of science include also the ability of bridge-building, passage-opening and transition-making (even when they are somewhat unorthodox), science will enlarge its scope, while generalists will receive a recognition of their status and a well-founded critical appraisal of their contribution. This will help them to rationalize the imposed feeling of guilt that, since they are dealing with nothing specific, they are useless. Knowledge is not the first objective for the generalists. They are more interested in motivations, sensibilities, creative drives, stimuli that lead to the creative act. Their motive is not duty but love, and they see their work not as a task but as a mission. Consequently, their goal is not (just) scientific knowledge but - wisdom.

#### 4. Museum Ethics And Museology

I came to the profession almost by chance but stayed there by the conviction – idealistic one, necessarily so as other convictions are only circumstantial. The problem arises when we hear that most of our colleagues say the same thing, many of them covering thus the fact that they even stayed by chance, never being offered highly paid or more important positions in the society.

This brings us to the first dilemma of the proposed theme upon museum ethics and the Museology, that of the very profession. Reaching the age when one reads less and thinks more I may have missed some newest reflections upon the state of our museum profession but as far as I know, not many among us dared to express clearly some definite suspicion about that profession of ours: does it really exist? Those who would immediately call the question an irresponsible blasphemy of an ignorant, I advise two solutions, according to their preference either to skip over the shallow criticism or give it a chance. By some recent research in United Kingdom (Lord, 1989), to take a good example, up to 80% of newly employed in museums entered the profession without any professional training. The obvious probability is that those already working in museums are untrained in a still far greater percentage. This may mean that profession can function and exist without training (as it may be obvious from the practice and achievements of the last two odd centuries of its existence) or that it will start to exist in its full sense only when the percentage reaches the inverted values. Neither life nor the profession would define themselves in simple extreme positions therefore one would use this provocative theses only as reminder of existing processes. Much is already said if we regard the profession as a process, the term suggesting openness of a constant change, implying thus that no position of its development could be regarded as the final one.

Let us try to count the basic elements of any profession to get a quick overview of the position of ours according to such a proposed structure.

1. Knowledge and skills (long-term training/education, usually university level)
2. Law regulations
3. License system
4. Codex of ethics
5. Specific professional culture
6. Autonomy
7. Specific performances
8. Mission

Whichever way estimated, one can hardly score 5 points for the profession, taking into the account that we have in mind only the so called western world. (One feels obliged to say at this point that whatever we talk about, be it museums or museology or even practical part of the profession, we have and should have only that part of the world in mind unless we are ready to revise all the mentioned and implied notions). That would roughly lead us to a possible conclusion that we deal with a profession in creation, the one that still has to be defined. It would be otherwise hard to explain why it has got its Code of Professional Ethics only recently, if we speak of its international level (ICOM, 1989). There is still a number of countries belonging to the western cultural circle (i.e. possessing the same concept of museum) where one does not find national code of ethics and none is applied, apart from diverse rules and regulations bearing the elements of it.

The ICOM Code of Professional Ethics is therefore one of the firm signs of adolescence of the profession. General as it is, it gives directions for further elaboration, it is more a reminder of practices to be followed, a systematized collection of points of importance with recommendations how they should be approached than a final professional rule (which is neither expected nor possible on an international level).

Why it took so long to the profession to reach the point of being clear about its moral duties and attitudes to its own self and (which is of utmost importance) to the society? The cynical hint is already there in the first chapter, if you are willing to share professional self-criticism. Machine building engineer getting his first job in a museum is not a curator but an engineer with the curatorial duties. If we set up an ideal goal to make him or her the curator we are installing Museology because what we talk about is the necessary transfer of the professional experience. It is of no functional importance whether we name it a science or just a theory because the aim stays in this handing over the sedimented expertise and vocational qualities of profession. It takes a few months in a military camp to train a young man the techniques of killing but a lot more effort is put in creating an urge or instinct for killing. The transfer is hatred. Far on the other side of this grim example pertinent to human nature, at least as much as caring for fellow human beings, are museums with their specific tasks. We who entered museum profession knowing only vaguely what it is remember clearly that the technical and methodological part of the job could have been learned very quickly provided that we were "sitting next to Sally". But, even to become a true "carer was, I believe, beyond the ready advice. Only through long practice, by following the curatorial destinies, of those devoted idealists who by chance or instinct found their inner self in the job, and those who used it only for their own advantage, a newcomer to the profession had a chance to build his or hers ethical attitudes. The lack of written expectations blurred the ideal moral profile of a curator. But caring meant basically fulfillment of the first two or three duties of the curator, i.e. those of collectioning, research and conservation, implying that in some way or the other the results of that work should be presented to the public. That was the reach of the responsibility in the sense of duty to be expected by a public servant, and it comprises hardly anything more than a technique. To add to a carer a moral obligation to be the sharer as well requires, much contrary to military ambition – love.

Therefore, whatever there is in the Code of Professional Ethics applies mainly to things important for the functioning of the profession from the aspect of the carer, that is a responsible curator, but it does not go further. It should have gone further but not too far: it would be possible to make suggestion that, say, truth be the basis of any message or image making when about public relations (which is not the case outside the non-profit sector) or that museum is not there to serve only the public but the relevant community implying thus a moral obligation to offer and extend its services to the non-public. That cannot be achieved by mere professional approach in the traditional sense because it implies creativity, pro-active attitude and devotion, in brief the things that cannot be learned but depend upon the vocational urge. Even if put into the form of code it would sound a preposterous ambition to require love, necessarily an idealist and self sacrificing "weltanschauung", the spirit for charitable work, for contributing to the common welfare in brief, the moral optic that one either possesses or not; this quality is then further argued and contextualized during the professional education and then fully developed in the circumstances of practice.

As it usually is, any code of ethics adds arguments to the regulated existence of the

profession, it helps to fight back the wrongdoing and misuse of the professional potentials, but on the whole, the Attorney General may be more enthusiastic about it than us: it cannot reach the core of the ethics of the profession nor it would be possible, as it has been already claimed. Ethics that make the basis of any usable museological theory is far more than the convention or agreed legislation, it is the way of thinking – the state of mind. No rule of no Code would obtain anything by requiring curators to love their users or their job (although it might be self evident that without the two things usually do not work). Without that, on the other hand, The Code becomes in great part just a set of rules of professional behavior that any engineer can sign when entering museum job, while still being unaware of the true nature of the profession. Therefore, the lament of how uneducated (for the profession) we are is not quasi-philosophical prepossession of Museology, but a try to say that the entire profession should be envisaged as ethical commitment.

Paradoxically, chapters on ethics are rare in museological literature, but again, there is no harm in that provided that everything one says or asserts comes from the ethical background. The entire Museology commences with the two questions: what and for whom (all the rest is either elaboration of it or question of methods and techniques) and both questions are ethical issues. All the numerous responsibilities of the profession are accepted moral obligations and not, like in some other professions, the question of the free choice, personal attitude, policy of the particular organization or the changing nature of profit.

Museology has long been the growing nuisance to the effective practitioners of museum world and they immediately dismiss the case it proposes. With the recent crisis leading to further managerialism in museums and with the authorities forcing museums towards self reliance, Museology will have a chance to consolidate the profession from within enabling it to face the severe challenges. It can, namely, offer the necessary self-reliance and self-confidence, the precious feeling of strength through a well defined mission. Strong dependence of museum legislative upon national and international laws, say upon illicit traffic, make it hardly possible to insist upon high ethical standards when it comes to practice. So, when extremely relevant questions are posed upon the "responsibility of the museum professional towards the makers and first users", talking about the museum objects, well behaved curators wave their hand. It seems that the inherent possessiveness of our institutions does not allow any other master: what "they" meant and thought when creating it or using it may be interesting to know but it does not oblige anybody. And yet, is it not the only aim of science to analyze this and propose how should we exploit the acquired knowledge for the benefit of our users?

This little example may remind us of the crucial, basic question of the very profession: what are we there for? Consequently, if answered, this question may lead us toward the redefinition of the means used to accomplish our task – namely the museum institution. This is obviously Museology and equally obvious ethical issue.

It happened rather logically that the States were leading country when it comes to some idealist projections concerning societal standards, be it Constitution or museum definitions: the first code of ethics appeared there and, apparently, also the first modern definition of the museum institution, that of G.B.Goode, by the end of the last century. Ever since, if traced by sources and by dates of their appearance, the definitions were less powerful and lacking that enthusiasm about making the world the better place for living. But the progress was made and it was considerable after the first ICOM definition which was already mentioning the "enjoyment" (1956) there came the famous round table in Santiago de Chile (where for the

first time the idea of museums taking part in development was asserted) and, consequently the still valid ICOM definition was made (1974). This is not the proper occasion to evaluate different definitions of various professional associations but one thing which becomes obvious when measuring their line of progress is the growing ethical concern, expressed as augmenting social responsibility of the profession. There could be an easy claim that the changes in theory and definitions just follow, with little exception, the practice of institutions. If true, this would only testify that our profession is still not concept driven, which is, when it comes to ethics, worse than just a defect.

Any definition should be regarded as necessary part of legislative but otherwise nothing but the briefest temporary reminder of the state of the art. I believe that we are ready for a conceptual leap which would comprise enclosing the entire scope of institutions as they are listed in the article 2 (b) of the ICOM Statutes: from natural monuments to the institutions having some characteristics of a museum. Everything we do in museums and related institutions brings ethical consequences and everything we say about museums or put into the written norms is an ethical statement, sometimes with the power of law. Let us suppose we are inventing a new definition of a museum institution. First of all, I would suggest that we try another term meaning many things so as to avoid additions in the very definition. Let us call it heritage action unit – any organized, regular action exercised upon the field of heritage, consisting of collecting, research and preservation of threedimensional and other information, meant for the communication of the complex human experience; it may be diachronous or synchronous, covering the span of past, present and future, according to the specific needs and circumstances of its users; contemplative or cybernetic in its effect, it serves to fulfill constant human need for the pleasure of understanding and widening of experiences, as a virtual set of extensions to human senses, as an amplifier to human abilities of comprehension, sensibility and will to act towards the wise, harmonious development in the given environment. This try, just one amongst many, witnesses again that we are still in the need of common basis for the theory and for the practice of our profession. It is my firm belief that we need a push forward which will make, even in definitions, the clear statement of the ethical basis of our profession: ideally and utopian, this would change the entire professional practice; imagine the past presented in a way which is deriving experiences leading towards understanding, tolerance, compassion, coexistence of differences, the past which is praising virtues and not helping the bygone hatreds and traumas survive and poison the innocent. Museums of revolution, scattered in thousands all over the Eastern Europe and USSR, were the early sign of the sure death of the system: the amount of bare hatred they contained was being so much resented that they proved to be counterproductive even in their anti fascist messages.

Could we hope that changed ethics and ripe profession could make it all better? The problem with quite a number of museum curators could simply be that except for more money and less responsibilities they do not see the need to become better, and they are absolutely right if perceiving their job only from the formal, contractual side of it. Those are the generations of losers as they do not react to the challenges around: the competition imposed by the electronic media, the still harder one launched by the heritage industry and the obvious separation of the some presentational forms, be it specialized exhibition halls or information networks. The dynamic profession with the clear vision (and definitions that demonstrate its ethical motivation) would be able to compete with more arguments and request the status with the more convincing power of moral obligation it has to fulfill. The perils we shall be meeting will be many and growing in number as, at the same time the available space of possible reaction will be smaller and smaller.

I have always started my lectures with the theme of the crisis of the museums first of all giving an account of the present statistics of the museum world: growing numbers and growing influence can hardly serve as an argument for crisis and yet, all that only demonstrates the amount of confidence put into museums, the quantity of expectations they should fulfill and embarrassment by the universal identity crises. If some solutions are sought for with museums that is because they still count, although others offer more and more and in dangerously attractive ways: firm ethical perception of our professional role in the contemporary society would keep us from staying inefficient (even if technologically disguised) and from imitating bad examples. Never before it was so decisive for museum institutions, and for whatever they perceive, as their mission to undergo a certain ethical renewal which will distinguish them at the same time from the corrupted governing forces of the contemporary society and the appearing soft industries which use museum disguise to gain relevance.

What we need from the profession is the constant ability of swift adaptation to changing circumstances (strong survival code) and renewed credibility for fighting for the common cause.

One could certainly argue that museum profession is just like any other, a profession on the market depending upon the subtle laws of demand. This could be partly true but only on the level of language and syntax of the message, because the message itself, however depending upon the user's need, stays the responsibility of museum. Museums definitely belong to the third sector which is their firmest outer ethical declaration. What stays to be defined within the theory of their mission (the only science there could be) is what are specific ethical responsibilities and aims to be elaborated or still further built to meet their ideal contribution to the society.

Therefore, unlike the libraries and archives, museums make a stronger statement, they propose a set of selected messages out of an enormous amount of possibilities usually coded beyond the visitors reach: in some other unexpressed interpretation or in the unarticulated information potential of the stored collection. They cannot offer themselves to their users the way the mentioned two institutions do: the retrieval there being matter of free will and individual interest. (On the other hand, when a museum tries to be exhaustive like some encyclopedic museums, we encounter the unique problem of museum fatigue, the thing no other institution knows). Deciding therefore which message to offer is one of the major ethical choices to be made in a museum. Of course, it is of the same ultimate importance (although partly implied in deciding which message to offer) to know the user of the message, and intended impact. Even the least experienced professional would know that taking this decision will ultimately formulate the collection policy on one side and the relations with the users on the other. And, like mentioned before, that is what Museology is essentially about. The reunification of the world that is happening due and because of the informatics gets together the museum, archive and library practices, and does the same for their respective theories (making thus Museology one of the information sciences and drawing the final and decisive demarcation line towards Museography). It happened, and will happen more often that all three sectors together with data banks and telecommunication sector form common network, a data base for commercial exploitation. The entire scheme can be viewed from the ethical standpoint and there are many questions of importance that can be raised. For instance, the new practice of museums places their interest and information collection in the real time with living protagonists: how should we regulate the disposal with the information? More important an issue is the right of decision upon the choice and contents of the information

where I would like to see museums, or the three mentioned kindred sectors to have the minimal 51 % of the conceptual shares to stay in control.

It is therefore not Code of ethics, that pleasure of the Attorney General, what will assure accomplishment of the professional mission (or, indeed, formulate that mission) but the clear moral of the profession, that vocational zest stemming from the full understanding of the unique invention of human culture, that of heritage preservation.

If, as we were told, the final aim of our effort is keeping the evidence of the victorious campaign of our civilization and culture through the accumulation and transfer of knowledge, then our Code of Ethics will be the set of rules made up to control the greedy and corruptive civil servant. If we are employed to be the priests of the Church of Materialist Eternity by keeping those material evidences alive in spite of the laws of physics and chemistry, then it is not the humanist credo but the task imposed by our rulers that make us do our job. Again, the Code of Ethics is just a part of the contract: something given or induced, and not the visible, formal part of the moral philosophy of the profession.

If, on the other hand, we are here to match the forces of change with the mechanism of regulation and correction, in the true cybernetic sense – in order to contribute to the proper guidance of our spaceship Earth, then we must have an ethical code which will serve as a clear statement of our role in the society: not only following it like a scribe of its preponderant forces or tracing it like a chronicler, but taking an active part in its change. Museums were so far analyzing the world while the whole point is to be a part of its transformation helping the creative forces to function, making thus the change logical and acceptable. Still occupying the role of catalyst and amplifier, this museum is operating in real time and with real people, as mechanism through which people correspond with their past, their collective memory, their collective ego, their coded identity, with their fears and hopes – and all that represents an enormous responsibility. I like to think that museum has a certain moral right, a moral right of elder in the name of which it can act somehow protectively, sticking its neck when right but not understood. It is an enormous ethical question again in the basis of our profession. We dispose with selected, scientifically approved knowledge, with the considerable and convincing part of the collective memory. Does this immense potential bring an immediate obligation to use it for the benefit of our society, community or a group? Who decides when and how we use it? Is museum a democratic institution by the fact of the free choice offered or by the ambition to play an active part in democratic processes?

Creating knowledge implies already moral responsibility of a scientist, but using this knowledge burdens this responsibility with an immense weight. It is therefore far from scientific formalism to ask whether we are here to act as (one of) the mechanism(s) of approbation of the governing socio-economic-cultural system or one of the mechanisms of critic of that same governing system. This big shift creates the ethical potential of heritage based institutions, museums, in all their exploding variety. If development consists of duality of the parallel forces of change and adaptation then the disproportion within that duality is the probable essence of any social (maybe even existential) crisis. The profession which would be fully aware that it plays important part in this constant humanization of the society would consciously accomplish its difficult role of a cultural institution: "the culture is somewhat like the moral of science" (Roland Barthes, 1980) and the science is in the basis of the economic and political system (or at least being used by them to generate static patterns of authority, power and order).

If museums dispose with such an enormous quantity of past evidence they might figure as mighty mechanism of productive analysis of that past so that the conclusions could be used for living the present more effectively and for developing the usable future in front of us instead of the constant succession of fatal mistakes. The fact is, however, that museums (except the family of ecomuseums) neither take part in the real time circumstances nor they try to influence the life or destiny of their respective community (if, indeed, they feel like belonging to any at all). The reason is hidden in the deficiencies of their own institutional heritage and expressed in the lack of moral drive. The present prevailing traditional model of museum institution is the result of the amalgamated possessiveness and individualism of great collectors, scientific enthusiasm of rationalist scientists and the frustrations of the world in dramatic identity crisis. Any possible outcome of this is just too far from any idealist ambition of restoring integrity and moral order of the world: knowledge is quantity – wisdom is quality, one is contractual responsibility while the other is ethical obligation.

#### V THE TIME FOR THEORY

1. Towards a modern concept of museology
2. The concept and nature of museology
3. The limited reach of museology, or could museology stand a sandstorm or tropical rain?
4. What is museology?
5. The future of museums and the role of museology
6. An introduction to mnemosophy as the general theory of heritage
7. Definitions and revisions – towards the total museum
8. Can theory help and be pro-active?
9. Making the total museum possible

1. Towards a modern concept of museology  
(Informatologia Yugoslavica 15, 3-4, 211–225, 1983)

In spite of the fact that a few museum experts have written works of lasting value on the theme of museology and museums, as yet there has been no treatment of the integral problem of modern museology in its totality. There have appeared, especially over the last few years, a few books which are strong arguments against any doubt in the existence of museology<sup>1</sup> or about the need for it. Neither Georges-Henri Rivière<sup>2</sup> nor any younger colleagues have taken up the task of providing a systematic definition of museology as a science, especially of a contemporary, advanced and even avantgarde museology. This task depends on a small number of potential authors (who are simultaneously philosophers, museum workers, practitioners, grounded in certain fundamental reference fields of philosophy and the practice of museum work). The circumstances that work against such an attempt may be of a certain specific, almost personal nature, however the reasons why this has not been done are probably of another nature.

At the ICOFOM Conference in Paris<sup>3</sup> Z.Stránsky<sup>4</sup> drew attention to the very important obligation that exists towards museology and its affirmation. Citing an article published one hundred years ago in Germany<sup>5</sup>, and drawing from this an appropriate commemorative duty, Stránsky was of the opinion that a history of museology should be written. It is hardly possible to think of anything else more logical that should be done before undertaking a systematic consideration of advanced deviations. Deviations from what? Museology today exists as a relatively heterogeneous collection of books (which are just conditionally museological), articles in professional journals, material from ICOM conferences, a few reports from symposia that were landmarks of development such as the two Volumes of the meeting in Barcelona 1932<sup>6</sup> or the quite short but significant report from the MUSEUMS AND THE ENVIRONMENT Symposium in France 1972<sup>7</sup>, two issues of MuWoP<sup>8</sup>, etc. It is not after all without significance that each even slightly knowledgeable museologist (who are at the moment in the main museum workers interested in the philosophy and other aspects of museum practice), if asked to draw up even a very short list of reference world literature would come up with a different version. A fundamental work which would treat the history of museological thinking and exemplary professional organization, which, instead of just being a social history of museums, would analyze changes in museum practice and establish the laws of the modern world that must affect museums, such a work would form a true base for the planning of the present and future of museums (since this, in short, is the task of museology). Recent examples of initiatives in museological thinking in the above mentioned MuWoP witness to the fact that we are far from a minimal consensus on what museology is and what is the subject of museology<sup>9</sup>. The differences are drastic: according to some, museology does not actually exist, others consider it to be the science of museums, while a third group define it as a multidisciplinary philosophy of the museum mission<sup>10</sup>. The reason for this, and let it be clear so that those who consider the museum as purely a practical and pragmatic phenomenon do not rejoice prematurely, is in fact the lack of a common starting point of which a systematic history of museological thinking is only a part.

It was seen in MuWoP, not for the first time and not only there, that in attempting to reach agreement, museum workers often use a totally arbitrary terminology which, instead of being a means of communication becomes a barrier of misunderstanding. A basic effort in relation to this, the construction of a multilingual professional dictionary is now nearing completion<sup>11</sup>

and its existence bears witness to the problem that it is hoped to solve. A circumstance of lesser dignity in the sense of a scientific explanation, but which also affects the state of contemporary museology is its relative poverty or even its exclusively pragmatic orientation, so that only a small number of experts are able to engage themselves in museology. A logical and true conclusion that should not be omitted is that neither the museums themselves, nor the cultural and social context have realised the epochal importance of the mission of museums. As a result a great number of well-wisher- amateurs take part in museological discussions and often retard and complicate matters while wishing to do the opposite. After all, it is not a secret how few places and experts there are that are really concerned with the study of museology, museological conferences are frequently more or less successful seminars in museology.

At this point Z.Stránský gave an unavoidable directive, saying that the total activity of ICOFOM must be developed on the basis of the professional potential of museological institutions worldwide while, of course, not rejecting the involvement of individuals<sup>12</sup>.

Among the general reasons for the lack of definition of the concept of museology one can mention the "third crisis" of traditional museum institutions. This crisis, like the previous two (if we agree that there have been so many) should introduce a new quality. In the same way that Alvin Toffler<sup>13</sup> regards the future as already being present all around us, it is possible to claim with reason that future forms of museum activities already exist today. When talking about the difficulties in forming a modern museological system, the expression "crisis" has not been rare in the literature and international meetings of the past decade. If nothing else, the state of crisis is a confirmation of unmet needs, unrealized changes and, accordingly, a herald of something new. Since the future is truly around us, we should be talking of the emergence of museums of the "third wave".

Valid definitions of a museum are only partially applicable to past forms of museum work. Since we know today the meaning of an organized complex that we call a museum, and since we know that the majority of developed countries include an inspection body within the museum service which has the power, after checking this mechanism, to remove the title of museum from an institution<sup>14</sup>, we know therefore, what the title of museum implies today and we must deny this title to all original forms of museum activity or else expand the title given to the existing type of institution. There can be no sharp boundaries in organic growth no matter how much effort is made to discover dates: therefore, right up to the time when the first museums were founded in Europe, that is, when private collections shyly opened their doors to an interested public, one can only talk about prototypes of a museum institution<sup>15</sup>. None of these "institutions" was more than a public collection, frequently with only one custodian. Before these transitional forms, in spite of all possible visionary individuals and even institutions<sup>16</sup>, there do not exist valid elements which would allow us to consider this "first wave" of proto-museum forms as true museum activity. The end of the 18th century and especially the 19th century were the period in which modern museum institutions appeared. In this breakthrough period the museum phenomenon experienced extreme prosperity of all inherited charges but also advanced towards a new quality. The museums of the first wave were collections of curiosities and treasuries in the ownership of the aristocracy. The second museum wave, that of bourgeois museums, museums of the industrial revolution, was burdened with questions of national prestige <sup>17</sup>, a romantic view of the past and the treatment of museum pieces as souvenirs and as representative evidence of the general superiority of the class and the period. At this time a pharaoh complex became established in museum practice

which continues to be omnipresent in museum activity today 18.

Proving their superiority to one another, the nations of developed Europe created museums with the clear function of building the national spirit, whose joint effect did not speak of Truth (which is the key word of the contemporary approach), but of whatever truth was most attractive. In the 19th century museums (which continue today) generations left an idealized picture of their existence. This was least obvious in museums of natural sciences, although even they were not spared from the prevailing attitude towards the phenomenon of museum activity. A museum of the second wave collects everything that gives a positive picture and is even now still occupied with the elevated character of thought and action. However, an important change did take place in the second wave of accelerated development of the museum phenomenon. The ambitions of bourgeois society assumed a faster and broader education for all: the ideas of visionaries for mankind came together with those of the leaders of the industrial revolution who could not do without a wide base of educated workers. For the first time the museum was recognized as an unsurpassed place of learning which speaks in the language of three-dimensional facts. Such an attitude did not significantly influence the manner in which objects were collected, but it did initiate the foundation of new types of museum<sup>19</sup>. With retouches that are a consequence of greatly changed circumstances, second wave museums continue to be amongst us and have not undergone any significant changes in their hundred years of existence. Some of these museums have changed their external appearance, but it is very indicative in terms of contemporary museology that the changes are mainly concerned with physical circumstances. Neither the present nor the future start with a fanfare, but are heralded long and persistently by the service of individuals and development of circumstances. They are created where conditions for life are favourable; it is therefore difficult to say which is the first contemporary museum in the world, if such exists. A few institutions have however distinguished themselves by the positive nature of their efforts and by the innovations which they have bravely accepted in their manner of work 20.

In order not to use the term museum of the 20th century, since in this century museums of the 18th and 19th centuries will continue to survive, the new museums will be called museums of the third wave. Even if only museums, and not museology, are considered, it is clear that the opening of these museums was preceded by discussions and a number of arguments which in fact represent the nonuniform body of modern museology. Circumstances have indeed changed: the age of the industrial revolution is past and has been replaced by the postindustrial age, or, more precisely, by the age of the microprocessor. The world has changed fundamentally and is entering into a period of new responsibilities. We have established and even verified with a look from afar that we are alone in the universe, we have recognized our unimagined possibilities and their relativity and we have understood that by pressing a button we can remove one heavenly body and ourselves as biological units from the universe. Faced with its power mankind must make a lasting choice for the future. Each technological decision made today can bring about an ecological catastrophe already tomorrow. In the new circumstances museums must behave differently. They cannot remain irresponsible storerooms of souvenirs or prejudiced witnesses to former times. The museum of today and of the future is a communication-documentation centre where three-dimensional material appropriate to a museum is collected, but also all secondary documentary material which explains, illustrates or supports the message of this material. The manner of collection must continue to be selective but the sample collected must be truly representative rather than seeking to impress 21. Part of the reason for this is that the new museum ceases to be burdened with its collecting atavism and views the practice of collection as having the aims of a true message and a living communication with the community to which it belongs. Stated

more clearly, this is a decision for a communicative museum as opposed to an informative one<sup>22</sup>. The task of a museum of the "second wave" was to be a selective memory of mankind on the principle of impressiveness (museums of natural and technical sciences are less subject to social trends), that is, to be the (self-)consciousness of mankind. Museums of the new generation are primarily communication centres which retain and develop all the other functions of a traditional museum but which are constantly confronted with their communication credo. The task of the new museums is that, with their documentary readiness, their communicativeness and their interest for the current circumstances of their micro and macro environment, they remain in a constant critical relationship to everyday life – they are not only the consciousness but also the conscience of mankind. However, such a museum is not merely a place of learning where one learns to recognize and master the problems that affect the contemporary world, but also a place from which positive action and initiative arise. The new museum desires to affirm the very important attitude that all the past is a worthless set of facts unless it is actively and creatively linked to the present and to the future.

Reflections in contemporary museology precede and accompany these changes in the dynamic life of museum institutions so that at one time they predict development while at another they evaluate or formulate it. One thing is certain and is becoming ever more obvious: contemporary museology is crucially linked to the development of communication and information science, but it also continues to expand the range of its multidisciplinaryity.

#### The present time

The new quality and the period of change that brings it occur simultaneously. Not only do there exist at the same time museum institutions which differ markedly in their nature and approach, but they also originate with such differences in the same period. Some are already old at the moment of birth, others are "progressive" only by means of successful disguise. Some belong to the past century, or at least to a firm traditional continuity, while some exist which represent deviations from tradition and convention, living experiments with controversial value as far as the man of today is concerned.

A short review of the situation has been presented in a few lines by the former director of ICOM, Hugues de Varine<sup>23</sup>. In fact, he defined the period 1965–1970 hinting at what had happened immediately before and designating a breakthrough event in contemporary museology that occurred afterwards.

"The most enterprising museum workers", states de Varine, "in those years lost their illusions: at least as an institution dedicated to tradition the museum was on its last legs, in spite of efforts taken up from all sides to ensure its future". Investigations were initiated to establish the most appropriate architectural solution, techniques of presentation were maximally improved, methods were discovered to improve the efficacy of educational work, etc. H. de Varine, not without a measure of impatience and jadedness, claims that all innovations prepared previous to this period, or realized within it, did not contribute anything to museums apart from an unprecedented financial crisis, an invasion of visitors into inadequate museum premises and a commercialization of culture which was also without precedent. In developed countries the community, according to him, became less willing to finance "unprofitable" museums and museum experts became frustrated because the "most important" part of their work evaded them and because they had to become something else. It is interesting that the

author talks with indignation about the pressure on professionals but would, however, be glad if museums became something else. At the same time, this would be difficult to carry out with the current nomenclature of jobs and without new professional profiles, i.e. without a different organization of work. "In developing countries", and this is relevant to Yugoslavia, "...the museum has ceased to be a useful factor in the life of the community, and the living forces of society have turned their backs on it in order to dedicate themselves more actively to "real problems". The picture of a disillusioned world of museums which the author suggests when discussing the 1960's, a period when it seemed that the greatest shifts had been made, is further reinforced by the author citing the declarations of a few museologists at the General Meeting of ICOM in 1971 in Paris <sup>24</sup>. In reality the picture is not so tragic but it obviously appears faded to the author in light of his fascination with the novelty of the ecomuseum and the new forms of museum practice which began to appear out of the reach of institutionalism and bureaucracy. The transition into the 1970's was satiated with the already existing. All that remained was to discuss what had been done and seen, refreshing novelties were expected. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that the practice and theory that was contemporary at that time is still valid today although it has been expanded, corrected and elaborated, and it represents in its range a significant part of modern museology.

Among the great "classical" museum the "Musée de l'Homme" (modernly built a few years before the war), the Museum of Modern Art in New York from the 1920's, the Science and Industry Museum in Chicago, the Romisch-Germanisch Museum in Cologne and the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Paris from the 1960's show the rough line of advance of museology and its application in practice. Other examples can undoubtedly be added to these "classical" ones. Revolutionary in their times, these museums have their belated followers. The best example, because it is the most well known, is probably the already famous East Wing of the National Gallery in Washington <sup>25</sup>. This is probably the last impressive and grandiose museum with all marks of the needs of the expansive 19th century bourgeois class, but with architecture that translates these needs with virtuosity into the language of this century. Whether due to a wrong and outdated organization of the history of art, or because – in the spirit of tradition – the average financier of the arts looks exclusively at objects of decoration and prestige, art museums (and this is especially noticeable in the USA) are most successful in resisting the communal ideas of contemporary museology. The National Air and Space Museum <sup>26</sup> in the famous Washington Mall exhibits the Space Shuttle in all its parts and tries by all methods to explain this technological wonder to the interested observer; just 500 metres further, in the equally modern East Wing, Alber's squares have to be understood without any assistance.

Hence, in 1971, while preparing the General Conference of ICOM, H. de Varine came to the idea of the ecomuseum in a conversation with G.H.Rivière. Since that time both of these experts have given several concise or broader definitions of this new phenomenon <sup>27</sup>. The ecomuseum is of a totally different nature from that of the traditional museum institution. The traditional museum creates a general idea of prestige, some pigeonholed scientific ambition which sees in the museum an instrument for research, documentation and only then, because of an "imposed" duty towards the financier, as an instrument of popularization and education. All the characteristics of its collection make the traditional museum impersonal, as are after all the professional interests which it presents. Only in the case of memorial museums, small local museums and similar, frequently just museum collections, does the character of the institution somewhat change. In principle the classical museum is an example of an implanted cultural initiative, something which by its logic should grow in an individual social milieu. For a long time the task of museology was, and to some extent remains, to think of ways in

which this disparity between the museum and the specificity of its social milieu could be reconciled and transformed into a relationship between the user and the provider of the services. After this it was required that this relationship become a creative communication. The chapter of the ecomuseum opens a highway into a different museology and towards different museums. The ecomuseum appears in a favourable set of circumstances but is conceivable anywhere. In it are lost the museum barriers which are paradigmatically symbolized by the museum keeper and shatterproof glass cases. It is difficult to distinguish the professional workers of the ecomuseum from the local inhabitants since both are involved according to their possibilities. The museum does not have limits defined by walls but is in a state of continual expansion, leading ever more people to a new sensibility towards the values of the town, local history and all other aspects of one socio-cultural circle.

The ecomuseum is an affirmation of all the characteristics of the living identity of the environment in which it is active. It is not an institution but a constant initiative directed towards the present and the future. It is the most detailed expression and "instrument of the total development of a community on the basis of its population, its heritage, its natural environment and its economic, social and cultural problems" 28.

In the era of microprocessor technology, telematics 29 and all offered and future means of communication as well as of new possibilities for the storage and searching of data bases, every widely educated individual will be able to avoid successfully the limitations of his specialization. So one needs not fear that experts working in such small and dispersed museums will necessarily be professionally handicapped. Even when unable to offer museographic perfectionism in the manner of metropolitan museums, these museums will have an advantage that is unattainable to others: their contact and accord with the community remove the boundaries between the museum and life and make the museum into a truly active participant of everyday life.

Large museums, especially the enormous ones, cannot attain such an advantage, but the newest generation of giants has already profited maximally from the experience and very idea of ecomuseums. The most striking example of this sort is the Centre Georges Pompidou 30. It tried within itself to reconcile paradigmatically two qualities which at first sight seem to be opposing: top-class, modern, institutionalized professionalism and democracy. I am of the opinion that it has fulfilled the set tasks as was envisaged – with the perfection of a machine. As opposed to the ecomuseums which are an expression of autochthonous life needs, the mastodons such as the Beaubourg, the Musée d'Orsay or the future Museum of Science, Technical Science and Technology (La Villette), in spite of all their superprofessionalism which is the last word in the field of cultural institutionalism, are still to be found within the traditional museum line and are real monuments to national prestige 31.

Smaller museums, such as the one in the former monastery of St Denis near Paris or, especially, the museum in Russelsheim, West Germany 32, and other similar examples have seriously grasped the instructions and thoughts of modern museology: with maximal correctness from the view of the techniques and technology of their work they have made a good link between universality and appropriateness to local circumstances. They have avoided an excess concern with aesthetics and artificiality and introduced all available elements of contextualization and reanimation of dead objects. The equivalents of the "provincial" character of the ecomuseum in large urban agglomerations are, to mention the most developed model of this type, the North American "neighbourhood" museums. The museum ensures its attractiveness by truly being a museum of a defined part of town which

has its own social, economic and cultural character. These museums are literally concerned with the population of "their" region, and in return obtain a loyal public and establish communication more easily. Puritans might find formal objections to the activity of such a museum (which often does not have a permanent exposition), but in contrast to a traditional institution this type of museum, just like an ecomuseum, fits the needs (and to a degree the possibilities) of the local community, and that is a great advantage in spite of the limitations. Neighbourhood museums, knowing how to follow the interests of their public, produce useful and effective exhibitions, frequently only of local significance but which represent part of the various efforts put into the development of the local community. Neither ecomuseums nor neighbourhood museums limit their interests. Everything that forms the characteristics of the locality is a possible subject of interest. There is also no awareness of the need to separate conservation and museum services apart from the administrative aspect. Some large and important museums in the world have also allowed themselves the pleasure of working for human needs and not just for imaginary impersonal intellectual interest: the Gementesmuseum in the Hague produced an effective example with its "Mass-kultur" <sup>33</sup> exhibition whose "basement" level shocked the affectations of the elite and truly delighted ordinary people and healthy intellectuals. Even though this took place in the Netherlands where the level of museology is exceptionally advanced on the foundations established by Sandberg <sup>34</sup>, this exhibition which took place in such an important, old and famous museum is, nevertheless, one of the victories of modern museology.

#### Limiting factor of the current definition

It is now quite clear that museology is not a science about museums since then its ambitions would have to be exhausted in the (no matter how relevant) area of technical details concerned with the organization and functioning of a museum institution in all its departments. It is quite correct and terminologically causal that such a set of tasks is called museography. If it was at all acceptable, museology would be a scientific discipline about the mission of museums, about the total attitude towards facts of nature, civilization and culture. In principle it would have to prescribe this attitude and study how and why the total work process of the museum develops. Multidisciplinary museology is a modern scientific discipline which is expansive and interested in making use of all available arguments: its limiting factor in relation to the total heritage (for only a part is deposited in museums) is, paradoxically, the museum itself. Thus, the museum as a storehouse with exhibition space or, in more modern terms, as a bank of three-dimensional documents, is just one of the institutions concerned with the relationship of man to his heritage. Where do the responsibilities of the museum begin and end? Is it not indeed limited by the definition and burden of its yellowed label? We have seen that someone will always fulfil unrealized needs. From this there appear various types of museal activity which undoubtedly belong to the same set of motives and the same complex of human activity.

The ICOM Statute <sup>35</sup> in one of its articles gives the definition of a museum, while in the next article it lists all forms of museal (not museum) work which fit this definition <sup>36</sup>. It is not necessary to insist maliciously in order to show that the definition from the ICOM Statute somewhat devalues itself. If, therefore, there is such a drastic problem in the definition of museal work, museology is totally hampered by it in proving the legality and breadth of its field of work.

In his lectures <sup>37</sup> G. H. Rivière gives the following definition of museology: "An applied

science, museum science. It is concerned with museum history, the role of the museum in society, specific systems of research, custody, education, organization, architecture, place and typology". G. H. Rivière himself, although the leading world authority in the field of contemporary museology, links the definition to the institution of the museum. As hinted at by the additional article of the ICOM Statute, a museum is only a part (although a significant part) of the organized relationship of modern man to his heritage. All the activity of a museum is fully encompassed by this concept of a relationship to heritage in the broadest sense and therefore can only represent a specific part of this relationship and not a separate quality. I personally do not see how, within this area of man's relationship to the heritage of nature, civilization and culture, the universal nature of a multidisciplinary science could limit museum activities (having in mind the breadth of the ICOM definition of a museum) to merely conditional specificities. There exists an important multidisciplinary science in the area of man's active relationship to his heritage, and this science is museology. From this it follows that the nature of museology requires that it expands to cover the total set of problems of which, as already stated, museums form just one, although important, part. In a paper presented at the ICOFOM Conference <sup>38</sup> I mentioned the possibility of distancing ourselves terminologically from limiting the subject of museology to the museum institution and the term "heritology" was proposed as the science of man's relationship to his heritage, while museography would cease to be, once and for all, a source of misunderstanding <sup>39</sup>. The forcefulness with which this new name was suggested was not a demand that it be accepted but, correctly understood, an invitation to reach agreement about the true context of museology which, if we decide to retain the current context, is a confusing term.

Just as the concept of a museum requires urgent re-evaluation and a new agreement, so is museology long ready for a revision of attitudes and definitions of its responsibilities. As a contemporary, multidisciplinary branch of science, one of those which attempts to transform man's knowledge into a total consciousness and feeling about space and time, modern museology will be of guaranteed importance in the time that is approaching. After all, just as the museum – or, if we orient ourselves towards the future, the whole number of various forms of museal activity which will develop on the basis of widely separated needs – may have to change its name, so may museology. If it retains the old name, which is really irrelevant, it will have to change its context. In the mouths of a few, modern museology, already now, is not what others call museology.

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- 36 Ibid. Article 4: A part from museum which were created as such, ICOM considers that the following forms should be included in the stated definition:
- a) institutions for conservation and exhibition galleries which function permanently within libraries and archival centre;
  - b) natural, archaeological and ethnographic monuments and places, historical monuments and places with the nature of museums for their collection, conservation and communication activities;
  - c) institutions which exhibit live specimens, such as botanical and zoological gardens, aquariums, vivariums, etc;
  - d) nature reserves;
  - e) science centres and planetariums.
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## 2. THE CONCEPT AND NATURE OF MUSEOLOGY

### TÄMÄ MUUTTUU

For a century now attempts have been made to establish museology as an independent discipline. (1) This endeavour has produced its own heroes and giants. In their work one finds solutions that dispel a century-old frustration: questions that demand the kind of answer that could not be provided earlier are being asked today, and practice provides enough elements for general conclusions. The post-industrial era outlines its own spiritual needs and today we already have museums of the third wave, which, through their practical experience, will finally facilitate a specific and comprehensive theory. (2) This apparently arrogant certainty (common in each period that regards itself as more important than all preceding ones) is based on sound arguments.

However, one museological theoretician, Z.Z.Stránsky, acknowledges that in terms of recognition and independence museology's progress has been fairly minimal. (3) Many authors unwillingly admit that museology is still in an embryonic stage, that it is passing through a heuristic period, in which it is still intensively collating and analysing facts about its field of application, while at the same time discovering the dimensions of that field.

Museology is torn between the obligations imposed upon it by the dignity of the institution of the traditional museum (a dignity not matched by its level of independence and recognition), the need to demonstrate the efficiency and strength of the academic disciplines (which it cannot match by its level of consistency and systematics), and the obligations imposed by its constant practice of serving the heritage (which it cannot discharge because it is not yet ready for a proper dialogue with the present day). Thus museology finds itself in an uncomfortable position that cannot last for long.

How does the frustration evident in museology today manifest itself? One needs only to look at museum publications and museological syllabuses, study programmes and documents that supply definitions to see contradictions in interpretation and in terminology itself. In Mexico and in France one often hears the term "museography" in a context where others use the word "museology". Similarly, the publication *Museum* (4) uses "museographers" rather than museologists; the Canadian *Gazette* (5) calls museum staff "museologists"; while some authors (6) insist that a museum worker is not necessarily a museologist, etc. Museology is most frequently defined as "the science of museums" and the fundamental tone is set by ICOM and its "definition" of museology and museography. A lack of agreement is, however, evident in specialist handbooks and encyclopedias. Traditional museology is still marking time by merely documenting the history of museums and listing their functions.

While Z.Z.Stránsky writes "we still do not possess a system of museology", (7) he also stresses that the establishment of a proper system is the most important feature of a science. Many authors have specifically called for systematic efforts to be made to develop proper museological terminology, (8) because their experience has led them to the conclusion that one definition may be used for a number of different things. Unfortunately, that is but one aspect of the problem. There are a large number of authors who, precisely so as to establish museology, advise various concrete measures. (9) The measures that they propose, and the definitions they suggest are off-putting in their complexity and number. Thus museology, with the participation of the International Committee of Museology, wrestles with the fundamental questions of its existence or, to be more precise, its origins.

Until recently the reasons for its slow recognition have been incorrectly formulated and museum-centred museology appears destined to a tortuous and fruitless labour. Considerable progress was achieved in France, where the foundations of modern museology were laid immediately after the Second World War; this situation was maintained by Georges-Henri

Rivière and reflected in the theoretical work of Mr Hugues de Varine Bohan. Some of those efforts, in which others joined (namely, Évrard, etc. ), were devoted to the ecomuseum. It is nevertheless clear that both the contribution of these individuals and others (10) and the progressive practices of the ecomuseum are way outside the traditional positions of the majority; that is to say they are still beyond the pale of acceptability. A short analysis shows chaos in which there are, however, the firm foundations of future order. - Let us briefly review the results of this situation and the new developments.

The basic ICOM museology bibliography, with its updated information, covers the most important works in the field. These are surprisingly few and even they touch only the fringes of museology. The fact that museology is not a science at a time and in a world in which there has been a whirlwind recognition and multiplication of museums is bound to result in confusion. To put it simply, we are running the risk of chaotic development; and we must be aware that our disagreements will be numerous and the burden of reform all the greater. If museology is established as a science, it will have to cope with the growing realization that academic concepts and methods are becoming outmoded. As museums emerge from the second generation, the logic of the nineteenth-century traditional museology can no longer provide a theoretical excuse for the classical museum institution. Traditional museology or the body of practical knowledge finds meaning only in its links with the institution of the museum. It has become clear that in spite of the challenges of new practices in a world that is in revolt against traditional values there is no museological message because there is no museology. There is nevertheless the international committee of ICOM for museology, and there has been an increase in the frequency of discussions (in particular through ICOFOM and MuWoP symposiums). In the absence of a clearly defined museology we have failed to eliminate in time the absurd situation in which the preservation of movable and immovable items and jurisdiction over them have been separated. It is therefore time to seek a new theoretical basis.

At the ICOFOM symposium in Mexico City in 1980 it was suggested that an ICOFOM working group for museology should be formed in the developing countries. (11) The idea was rejected "because there are not several museologies, only one". The argument may be considered valid because museology, if it is a science, must be universally applicable. At the same time it is incorrect, because the weaknesses of traditional museology are clearly revealed outside the spheres of culture and civilization in which it originated. Both in Paris in 1982 (12) and in London in 1983 (13) it seemed that traditional museology would be given the chance to adapt and to reach a new qualitative stage. But demands for radical changes were ignored. It is for this reason that today we have alternative museum institutions together with a new mode of thought. Moreover, ICOM itself for the first time felt the need to redefine its functions, aims and methods. Each alternative theory is in practice a challenge; and even if it does not have a defined system, its value lies in the way in which it identifies problems and poses questions. The emergence of the new museology manifests itself above all in the extension of the parameters of traditional museology. Today we can consider that phase to be complete.

Over the last century or so museology has in the main been bound up with itself, endeavouring to find in its ambitions not only inspiration, but also arguments. In the main, this introspection concentrated on the institutional form of the museum and attempted to bring the traditional museum up to date (what was really needed was to change it). Such limited analysis failed to describe the essence of the museum in such a way that inspiration for all the other conclusions could be drawn from its nature.

Taken as an eschatological ambition, as a manifestation of the "Pharoah complex" (14), the museum is solemn, serious and reserved; this is indicated by its very entrance hall and demonstrated by its atmosphere and above all by the objects that it collects, processes and

presents. In the traditional museum the museum item was above all an object of value; it had valuable material or valuable work invested in it, or it had the value of rarity. Its key function was to promote the prestige of its owners, even if that ownership fell to the people. Our age has discovered the museum item as a special and independent object of value and dispelled the hierarchy in which "trivial" objects are forgotten.

The development of specialized museums such as those of technology and natural history, or memorial museums, has given rise to a new way of thinking: the museum object as a context and the museum object as the transfer of a concept assumed a new importance. This progress is certainly not revolutionary and does not break down a tradition born of logical assumptions. No one wants to abolish the Louvre, but one may predict that it will be transformed into a historico-cultural heritage that will itself become a unique museum object. Thus the demythification of the museum object will not be a forced process but a gradual adaptation to new forms of museum practice. Because of the doubtful nature of the exercise we no longer place museum objects into categories of uniqueness, originality and irreplaceability and this has allowed the logical foundations to be laid for important reforms in museum practice and museology. The distinction between essence and existence, form and material, the idea and the object, is a philosophical inheritance in which the object is merely proof of our failure to match up to the divine model (as the neo-Platonists would say) — it is deficient and illusory, the consequence and the shell of an idea or a concept. Faced with a plethora of new views on the nature of the museum object (because in fact *everything* may be regarded as a museum object), we fall into the temptation of Thomas Aquinas to stop regarding objects as necessary. Hitherto, we have considered that only through the existence of an object, by presenting its physical appearance can we show the essence, the quality of an object, *that* which a thing *is*. Today, however, we frequently come across the view that a museological programme should not be based on the items that we possess or want to possess, but on the ideas that we wish to express. The consequences of such an attitude are unforeseeable. Collection falls into the sphere of physics, but the aims of museum work, museum software, are of a metaphysical nature. Creativity is the only way to bridge the gap between the two and is thus a crucial factor in our thinking about museums.

Faced with the logic of large numbers the world finds new forms of collation, processing, storage and communication of facts and information. The museum presents relevant information that may but need not be the three-dimensional object. Moreover, it is clear that the number of original, three-dimensional objects in the museum's working process will fall rapidly. With all its attendant risks technology has provided a means of circumventing the problems posed by a fragile or delicate object, for there is only a formal difference between the perfect hologram and the object enclosed in a glass case set at a safe distance.

The riches of the museum are now its potential for information and communication, its technical capacity, its expert staff and its logical, museological programme. The multidisciplinary museum or the integrated museum (G.H.Rivière) represent a phase in the drawing up of a modern concept of museum practice. In the "Age of Anxiety", a time of a universal identity crisis, and faced with a possibility of suicide, we tend to introspection and self-examination. The self-confidence of the industrial era is replaced by an ambition to improve the quality of life. The world and its museums seek a model for survival: After the discovery by Aristarchus that the earth does not occupy a special place in the universe man has escaped to an irrational Utopia. After Copernicus, Galileo and the discoveries of modern times we are left with the prospect of growing up only through our perceptions. The sophisticated nineteenth century preferred to find its expression in practical matters, purposefulness and efficiency. It also sought diversion through irrational flight into sentimentality and romance. In the museum reality was divorced from evaluation and criticism by historical distance and the museum's dignity. In the mechanical world it appeared

that education, being the acquisition of knowledge, was the panacea.

New needs and a new awareness, however, change the world and its museums. Custom technology replaced mass production, while new museums revealed a new feeling for individual details, for micro-situations, for the present. To cultural institutions the museum should be what, according to Gide, Proust was to poets: when we read him we begin to notice details where before there was only an inchoate mass. If we follow Gide's line of thought, we realize that Proust is not an analyst but that he "feels completely naturally". Although the last word is not in museum vocabulary: it is not technology that renders traditional museums unnatural, rather the way they approach their own mission and the false picture that they create through their selectivity.

The developments we are discussing gave rise to the phenomenon of the ecomuseum. The ecomuseum is a mutant of the museum type and a probable model of survival. As an institutionalized form of cultural action in the preservation of our heritage, it transcends the bounds of official definitions, determined in its origin and functioning by the characteristics and needs of the environment. It breaks down the barriers between the institution and the environment, between the curator and the public, between the object inside and outside the museum, between the movable and immovable object, and between information and the object. Its speciality is its all-embracing nature, and its long-term conception is based on adaptability. The ecomuseum is a museum organized according to its own needs — a museum which is less a fact and more a process, less an institution and more both action and reaction. The ecomuseum's collection is not designed along hierarchical lines and it is a *consequence* of active interchange with the environment. In other words, it does not condition that environment. In the current dilemma between "to have" and "to be" it opts for the latter. The ecomuseum is not a decorative artefact of the social environment: rather it is its mirror. Its interests extend into the future and only as a consequence of that into study of the past: in the ecomuseum the past is everything that is not the future, while the present is only the moving line between the two. Through its power to inform and communicate the ecomuseum creates an information medium whose characteristics are "integral thought, educated intuition and ethical premonition". (18) Unlike the memory of the traditional museum the memory of the ecomuseum is creative and dynamic. Coupled with mnemo-technology and new media that creativity will radically change the museum's place in society.

The experience of the ecomuseum and the initial theoretical capital of its pioneers alone make it possible for the sphere of museology to be extended to cover our whole heritage. The ecomuseums have allowed a great step forward to be taken in the practice and philosophy of safeguarding our heritage (redefining the museum object and redefining the process of "musealization"). Thus the museum (if we decide to retain the term) is each institution that focuses on an object (or piece of information), analyses it, weighs it against the past and the present, and stores it.

Repeating the methodological mistake of traditional museology there are those who propose a new concept of "ecomuseology" to be recognized. (20) However the experience of the ecomuseum also indicates that the academic discipline involving study of the methodology and techniques of the museum institution's functioning should logically be called "museography". If, through the breadth and scope of our concept, we can transcend practices we also transcend the institution of the museum to take account of man's attitude towards the whole complex of heritage: preservation, study and communication. The participants in such a broad theoretical approach are no longer the museums alone. Such a theoretical turning point recognizes a reality in which museums process only a part of the heritage.

Post-industrial civilization is holistic and synoptic; it encourages all forms of integration and interdisciplinarity in the face of the complex problems of the modern world. We need a theory that will recognize that multifaceted interest; from this theory we expect creativity, openness,

new questions and scope for a new awareness. With its closed horizons traditional museology dealt only in perfectionism which revealed its fundamentally museographical nature. The central problem was the institution and its mode of activity. Aware that the museums themselves are only a means to an end, we started to reform the institution, but at the same time we realized that the subject of the theory is an essential part of the very phenomenon of heritage, of which the museums are only a part. The integralist approach to the phenomenon of heritage logically extends into legislation, into terminology, into the names of institutions and new initiatives for synchronized activity even at the international level. One author calls the current lack of co-ordination in the presentation of our heritage an "anomaly", advocating an "all-embracing heritage" and describing the present situations as "only a historic accident". (21) Appeals to seek in museology a "theoretical framework" for the museum movement (22) are merely an acknowledgement of the problem, not a suggestion of a solution: the subject of traditional museology — the museum — no longer exists in a well-defined and clear dimension, so we are probably dealing with a "heritage movement" and a "museum transformation". The logic of the new approach has inherent within it a stimulating provocativeness: the proposed term "heritology" (the study of heritage) does not repeat the fatal timidness of "ecomuseology", which through its partial demand betrays the broad idea of the ecomuseum. The new museum and the museum of the future are vital, living and challenging mechanisms; one should expect the same vitality from the relevant theory. In our relation to our heritage there must be a body of theory that can be applied to the task of analysis and organized action. Such a theory would have the properties of a specific kind of "heritological" cybernetics. Perhaps it would succeed in co-ordinating and uniting in one philosophy libraries, museums, exhibition centres, restoration departments, institutions for the protection of monuments, archives, film institutes, other information centres and the media in work which is "heritologically" orientated. The logic (23) of bringing together the disciplines of archives management, librarianship, museology (i.e. museography) and, to some extent, communications and information studies is apparent. The presence of the museum in such an array is justified by the informative nature of the museum piece and the museum's powers of communication. This, however, is only part of the truth. As museums prepare for the future they have three options before them: they can disappear, they can be transformed into data bases for large information technology systems, or they can play the role of one of the most important mechanisms of environmental harmony.

It is not without symbolic significance that André Malraux was also an accomplished museologist. His "imaginary museum" represents the value of the museological, or rather "heritological", epiphany - a museum that is an idealistic, artistic vision beyond the scope of current museum theory and practice. The nineteenth century insisted on knowledge; today our ambition is rather to create a state of sensitivity towards, or consciousness of our whole heritage. Ecomuseums show us this through their pioneering efforts. The way in which the new forms of museum practice and the practice of modern art are converging is most indicative. All forms of art that are more than mere play or decoration aspire, just as museums do, to find answers to eternal questions. They do so from the same starting point (*identity*), with the same ability (*creativity*) and with the same method (*interpretation*). As does art, the new museum has an overall responsibility imposed on it in the name of objectivity. However, its challenging nature and its adaptability make it a creative and basically subjective medium. We have discovered that the presentation of the past either through a collection of random remnants or through a conscious selection cannot be objective. In the dead world of museum objects only a form of artistic creativity can produce live pictures in the spirit. Genuine communication through museums has always inspired a form of poetic experience, which is at the same time the only foundation for all the expected consequences of such communication. Just as the area of a circle can be calculated only by using a transcendental number, so the

character and experience of our heritage can be communicated only by introducing the transcendental factor of artistic creativity. In modern museum communication one can recognize elements of magic (exhibition techniques, new media), religion (museum fetishism, the epiphanic character of the museum's message), social organization and play (conventions, rules, social events), etc. These are elements of syncretic, para-artistic communication which, according to McLuhan, take us back to the total communication of the primitive society. Attempts to define the character of the ecomuseum through its humanism and comprehensiveness resemble an endeavour to define art (24), while the new museological statement has the hallmarks of a poetic communication. (25) A perfect, pure memory (of museums or social mechanisms similar to museums) and unrestricted artistic creativity have in their high-tech, media-orientated environment a distant focal point - the total museum. Ironically, in this way, through a full recognition and realization of a new museological message, we finally leave the museum behind.

Notes:

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### 3. THE LIMITED REACH OF MUSEOLOGY, OR COULD MUSEOLOGY STAND A SANDSTORM OR TROPICAL RAIN? TÄMÄ MUUTTU

The modern traditional museum institution is a plant indigenous in Europe and spread in some areas of the world with a similar cultural climate - but not only there. The Western European culture, barbarously aggressive as it is, sees no boundaries to its expansionism. The rationalism of the laborious middle class came up some two hundred years ago with a clear motto: the progress. A superficial analysis even would affirm that the preposterous idea of a physical human as a center of the universe, created so attractively in Renaissance, culminated in the cult of possession. The method used was - conquest. But, as protagonists of that historical process, we do have a legitimate right to ask questions and do revisions. The progress brought us to the one way dead end street where we have to rethink the entire matter. Not everything was bad, though. But, as we are speaking about our responsibility for the destiny of the world, there we have to face some doubts and some bitter truths. Museums we know well are an offshoot coming out directly from the roots of that successful civilization of ours. They bear clear characteristics of the entire plant. Museums are there, speaking generally, to protect and care for identity but they also grow from it. What do they show? - Surely, our constant "weltanschauung", our philosophy of life, that is of possessing as the only sure way of existing. You find it everywhere in our museum world. After we gave up religion and assigned it a place in tradition and folklore we started to affirm, following the quasi-biblical pattern, some new deity which, dramatically enough, resembles so much the golden calf - a useless precious thing that is pedestalled in the middle of our vanity fair. I find museums, specially those of history, of art and their derivations, real cathedrals of that new religion. (Simplifying things to make them more obvious, we cannot take up the case of the growing European alternative.) Curiously enough, second museum boom is happening like a retro-show: the class that invented museums and whose apotheosis coincided with the first boom of museums is no longer there. Museums were one of the most sacred and prestigious institutions of the expansive and prosperous, wealthy class and even today they are witnesses of their great victory and temples of their triumph. Like in proto-museums they contain the evidence justifying the conquest. Only very recently important museums have started to show signs of professional self-recognition trying to find new motives of their existence. The appearing science of museology with a century of its own tradition is a part of the prevailing cultural and professional context - of the European context. Necessarily similar in character, it is there to support the legitimacy of the traditional museum concept and to show a serious concern of an engaged science.

An institution is the emanation of the system of the ruling power and therefore bears the same prerogatives. Modern, traditional, second wave museum is conquerous, expansive and bureaucratic. It is money run and consequently (at least in some way) must earn money. Due to that nature it shows bad consciousness by the absurd insistence upon techniques and technology, simultaneously forgetting those basic questions that may keep an individual or an organized body in truly justified existence. The theory assigned to that practice is methodology and technology concerned - it represents an impressive set of instructions for handling the matter. Traditional museum is a democratic mechanism for the discrimination of social groups. The past is, and I make the paraphrase upon one of A.Gide's characters, a luxury that belongs only to the class of owners. The past is a privilege, I add.

This post-industrial turn of the civilization (very much due to the competitive philosophy of Western European civilizational circle) has built such a predominance of the corresponding model of culture that it is used as a transfer for all sorts of export. There is a whole elaborate system of agencies, institutes, schools, foundations and appropriated policy under the benign

title of cultural exchange, which represents channels of influence. Tourism helps too. They all create the effective network of promotion and export of culture. Once imported, culture means a changed way of life, a set of new needs to be fulfilled. The last instance may easily be the political dependence. It is paradoxical that museums take part (as they have to be about identity and to grow out of it) in a sense that they become a means in the process of acculturation.

Imported model of museum may be just a finalizing factor to other cultural or para-cultural imports: a scheme artist-art critic- gallery-collector-museum, individualist myth of artist as a witch doctor of the informational tribe, very notion of art for its own sake etc. Whereas in economy, which commits great injustice and harm to many, you cannot possibly sell raincoats in Sahara - the absurdity of cultural export of the same sort is rarely that obvious - if at all. Besides, the modern European based civilization has succeeded to create a rather coherent image of an international culture with the right of citizenship all over the world. So "the enemy", the ready transfer for further import and local spreadout, is already within the walls. This enemy usually declares the greatest possible concern for the future of the backward community. It creates and helps the arguments of some modern, progress-oriented ideology using the natural means of the international culture. A museum institution, for instance.

Not long ago Malraux, who is credible enough, claimed that the idea of a gallery of paintings is unthinkable at the Far East. I find it myself a rather awkward invention, although I do not know if anybody in my country shares the same feeling. While speaking about the conquering nature of the European museum institution, I have in mind museums of culture as well as those of nature. I am sure that one could find among the preserved cultures of the so called developing countries those, where a zoological garden - a prison for innocent animals - would be inscrutable and savage idea. So would be somewhere exposing a great work of art to all and everybody or even hanging it on the wall. The civilization that has made possible Hitler and Stalin likes the illusion of democratic freedom and gets satisfied by the snobbish pretention of "the masses". There in the West we have a very sinister, curious habit of framing the works of art and, as we do it for some four centuries, it is part of our way of thinking about art (cage again!). The same way the rich people have means to "sell" their bad taste to the crowd, the rich West imposes its barbarian achievements to the poor rest of the world. So the younger but wealthy brother is patronizing the entire family - successfully, one has to admit, as long as his value system manages to be more convincing. Culture and its proper values appear within that general system as an auxiliary part: as a hostess or a geisha at the business lunch - important for the image of the owner and for the atmosphere but only used. Needless to say, imported museum concept is only a part of the scheme of dependency, a sort of a cultural addiction within a broader practical context: Coca Cola is therefore a good symbol, either a start or a finishing touch of a wider, also a cultural, conquest. Even if locally produced the most of these imported goods (be it a museum, Ray-Ban glasses or jeans) only augment the thirst and reinforce the fascination with the original. Running a major Western museum with all its technological and methodological perfection requires the elaborate context that simply does not exist in any developing country. It is not only a question of finances (which have to be counted in tens of millions of dollars) but also the question of the lacking technological support, non-existent public structure that makes the museum run (paying visitors, volunteers, sponsors, donors etc.) and, finally, of the complete lack of necessary sociological, psychological and cultural foundations within the local context. Such imported institutions are a great burden to the already troubled world of developing countries. These deficiencies that such an institution has to meet in its functioning (should one mention at all the problems with staff, airconditioning, outfit, details of laboratory and care equipment?) result in a set of troubles - in a great frustration. Since the professionals are also

imported, this way or another, they are unable to cope with the circumstances strange to their acquired knowledge. So, paradoxically, conquering influences do happen with only the initial effort of foreigners, whereas they are carried out by local people. This imposed change of values is accompanied by the dependency in development which means that the subdued culture is forced to follow the same development pattern and is therefore condemned to constant lagging behind the cultural matrix. Speaking specifically about museum institution, it is most probable that within the average circumstances of developing countries (if there is some common denominator) an European museum can hardly serve good purpose. However, Europe is being dissatisfied with its traditional museums and has invented and developed ecomuseums. That, being a part of a new approach has changed a lot in the entire institutional configuration. But novelties, like in industry, are not very much exported. Those who make the export possible and those who are importing are not very much sensible to the subtleties of the creative museum response. The novelty is the change that sees museums as active agents, even as generators of development. So far, we have had "just any development" and museums have been only the passive witnesses. By having them active I surely do not mean their participation in politics and economy but their involvement of a ready consultant, of a democratic, common sense tool for acquiring necessary decision transparency. I see them also as an opinion making mechanism. Museums (and kindred institutions) should be wells dug into the identity, where we could always find clean and fresh, uninhibited inspiration to continue our specific way. The world of future (isn't the present a part of it?) will be vitally dependent upon varieties.

The post-industrial, post-modern and post-historic world is turning into an enormous, cacophonous bourse of information where, like in the economy, only those with solid reputation and stable identity keep the steady exchange rate of their importance. We are heading towards another utopian (?) dream of the "society of the total information" (Jacques Bureau), non-ideological and transideological. Arguments for this? - Myriad: Just turn on your TV and radio set, open your newspapers, see books that are offered, analyse the market of the video tapes etc. Analyse the offers for inclusion into different networks linked to the enormous data banks. You will hardly have much choice but to join. The advantage is there, but there is a danger too. What mechanisms can you use to balance all this? What is cybernetics that you can rely upon? There are answers. Museums, and I surely do not mean marble storages of relics, are like the golden coverage of your communicational value (that you may wish to protect). (Should I add at all that I am concerned more with the conceptual side than with the physical objects?)

Condemned to play a role of the younger and poorer, already convinced that they cannot but import, the developing countries are condemned also to self-depreciation, self-pitying, in short - to inferiority complex. Whether the part of some wicked plot or not, this is exactly the way to open the gates widely to total acculturation and spiritual dependency. Historical experience that gives a panorama of civilizations makes the present state very relative, but, indeed - who cares? You need an "investment" in financial and communicational values to lounch your message into a steady orbit: this is a counterpart to the first cosmic rule in physics. But you probably lack both components to get through with the truth.

Deeper in the spheres of everyday life (usually ignored by museums and certainly by museology) of, say, ordinary people (with their lack of time and motivation to understand the subtleties of the world, the complexities of development, the relativism of value systems and the injustice of any imposition), we have to deal with sorrowful facts of cultural segregation and racism. For the majority of people in the West the fact of poverty is a clear sign of incapability, incompetence, lower ability of judgement etc. The world is being divided (that is what sophisticated theories suggest) into the smart and the stupid. If you cannot produce attractive goods, if you are not able to show the marvels of your engineering, if you haven't

got magnificent opera, if you lack museums with priceless (!) and fabulous (!) collections (that could show even geographically how far your power got hold) - if you lack all this and things alike, something must be wrong with you. If you cannot earn for decent living, if you cannot afford to goodies of the affluent society, if your flat is small and nobody has private horses and a swimming pool, you are not relevant - you are just a second rate citizen of the prosperous planet. If you claim you are equal, the majority that I describe rarely opposes on the basis of racism: it is worn out, outmoded and compromitted. They simply think that your abilities (maybe due to some natural deficiency of your race) do not function effectively. Not very consolatory, is it? If you want to verify this, do not go to museums but to pubs, clubs, sport events etc. I may sound rude for leaving the bureaucratic vocabulary of hollow benevolence usually used in international gatherings. You may blame me also for seemingly broadening the theme outside the inherent area of museum concern. But, things are not simple. The first sin of our Western civilization, when inventing the care for heritage, was to confine the entire potential of the idea into the ivory box of the museum institution. And, if you allow me, even the notion of museum was ever since a limiting factor to the necessity of a broad vision. Who is in charge of some synoptic overview, of some panoramic analysis that could offer us a possibility to see exits where otherwise only walls are visible? Museums are not the only, but they should be able to assist or to take part. Anyhow, with their capacity of stored collective experience they are inevitably the vital, self-defensive, cybernetical mechanism of a society, of an identity. With such a task clearly assigned to them, museums will change and, maybe, change dramatically. At least through those new ones.

Speaking about that fatal difference between the developed and undeveloped, about differences in possessions and colour of one's skin, about differences that we often see in aggressive confrontation, I must add one important detail: every one of those developed countries has its own whites and blacks (among whites!), its own north and south, its own affluent and poor, its own privileged and disadvantaged. A will for power and domination is universal and evenly spread all over the Planet.

The obvious lack of decent philosophy (of our mission) may be blamed for the fact that good experiences are poorly used and hardly profited from. It is at the first glimpse paradoxical that those that should profit the most, namely developing countries, using the experiences as shortcuts for their advancement profit less than others. They obviously lack that professional training that would give them ability of orientation, of analysis and of adjustment. How can it be acquired? By proper training and by education, by creating of the responsive, dynamic profession able to react the most suitable way in very different situations. The clash of museology with the complex, delicate situation of the developing world is the real verification of it. I doubt that the traditional museology could stand this test. Science or not, this discipline should function and be applicable universally. Concerned very much with the history of museum institution, with methodology and technology of its functioning, traditional museology is shaped to serve the world of developed. And even there it is seriously questioned by the growing alternative.

The time of the unavoidable speed up in the entire heritage care is here, and we simply cannot afford the time for the natural sedimentation of experiences and for the process of pragmatic improvement. We cannot wait until the traditional societies (as in the most of the developing countries) bore their museum-like response to the disasterous whirl of the shocking changes. And yet, they have to invent their strategy of defending their proper identity. Inventing is a lousy business if there is no elaborate spiritual readiness and reliable apparatus for analysis and projecting. My feeling is that the developing countries need a usable theory more than others. They are facing gloomy prospects if they do not help themselves. Through the usual ways - others will not.

At the end I wish to say that the main task of museums and kindred institutions in developing

countries should be to continue, to reinforce, to re-establish the identity, the self-appreciation, self-assurance and self-respect of individuals as well as of communities and nations. Only proud and self-confident people are free (as the contrary is equally true). Ernst Bloch, one of our gurus, has said something which we should not forget: "There is no human dignity without putting an end to the poverty." Therefore we need museums that are able to help in this respect too. That may mean, however, that we will have neither museology nor museums in developing countries - at least not in the version that is so readily offered. The developing world should strike back by cybernetic wisdom. The battle for the Planet we like, will be won or lost there.

#### 4. WHAT IS MUSEOLOGY? TÄMÄ MUUTTUU

Paper presented at the Conference on Museology, Umeå (Sweden)  
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Many speak of a crisis in the museum world, but crisis itself is not that obvious. If it is a question about numbers and a newly acquired importance in society, we are better off than ever.

Yet, as I have mentioned elsewhere, (1) there is a crisis of concept - we lack that superimposed part of our professional concern that views the new development with a necessarily critical objectivity. Museums and the institutional network of traditional caretakers within the field of heritage are just being given a chance. In a short while (I think that I am not speaking in historical terms), it will be too obvious that traditional museums are not able to respond to the brave new challenge. Museums may become obsolete.

On the other hand I have no intention whatsoever of convincing you that museology will save museums. Nor need you trust these cataclysmic prophecies. (Our planet is dying and yet one would have difficulty convincing the majority of people that this is the fact.) With the logic of pre-industrial man (who took his environment for granted and eternal), we have transformed ourselves in such a way that the destruction of living conditions may be a process of a few minutes or some hundred years. Both estimates are of no importance when compared to the duration of life on the planet or its lifetime up to the present moment. So, indeed, how do we proceed to convince anyone that museology is worth the paper it requires?

Let us say that I do not have to create the cataclysmic vision of the totality of identities that our planet is populated with, that I do not have to talk about twenty thousand species disappearing forever each year, that I do not have to talk about rivers, about woods, about seas, about the disappearing ozone layer over us; finally, let us say that some dozens of cultures have been extinguished and more are threatened with a near end. Assuming that you will read newspapers and reports, I have only one firm point to stress. It is an obvious state of urgency, but we have to see, or to hear, that the call is also directed to us.

What does it change? In practical terms it means a historically different position for museums. They are not there to be mere standards of excellence, (2) they are not there to flatter, nor to be a gaudy panache of prestige upon the warriors' helmets of a competitive modern world. That time of the irresponsible adolescence of mankind has now expired and we are already late in growing up. Museums are still, taken as a majority, part of that wasteful chivalrous decadence that refuses to see that the world has changed and needs no heroes in a useless tournament. I risk sounding like a Quaker preacher, but it is true that traditional museums (even if they look modern) are temples of vanity. In the vacuum of the unattainable, where the notion of eternity may be admitted, we have made an institution of our frivolous attempts at turning the physical into the eternal. Our museums only witness, like all the cemeteries of the world, that the fragile word is more durable than stone. And, besides, to any other civilisation except the Western (which is spreading so fatally), museums are just terrible physical traces of the dead, trophy-temples of a futile barbarous attempt to conquer time. Separated from life (because they cannot live it) and imposed upon the nature of things (because they claim to be stronger than the transitory nature of time), traditional museums are fighting a losing battle. Their history spans a mere two centuries, a period that by itself does not guarantee continuation. Their attempt to find a theoretical basis for their existence and their role in society is only one century old and, indeed, has not brought us any guarantee of its final acceptance in the proposed way, towards a new concept. (3)

Before discussing museology, one would easily talk about "misology", which describes the reluctance to leave the solution of some problems to intellectual research and speculation.

Barbarous "Weltanschauung" always boasted of its firmness and concrete character; the barbarous spirit adores directness and palpability, it requires straight answers and does not admit unanswered questions. You may call this approach rationalist, Cartesian or mechanistic, but it is certainly pragmatic. This is the same pragmatism that does not admit any museology beyond museography (enriched though by the proud history of museum institutions). And that is taken as absolutely sufficient. But there is something about pragmatism that Bertrand Russell noticed so well: it resembles, he said, a warm bath that is heating up so imperceptibly that one is never really sure when to scream.

New traditional museums are trying to convince us that the bath is just warm even if it is boiling: only the "museums of the third wave" have taken up the challenge to admit the trouble of our world, and are actively trying to participate in the search for solutions. That is why only those museums consider the link between their tasks and the theory that explains these tasks as natural. Their pragmatism is of a higher level and they need a theoretical body, a speculative part that will guide them or help them. Museologists are theoreticians, but whether they are preachers or not, it is not up to them to change museums. They help the reformers, so obviously placed in third wave museums, who, in their turn, are perhaps a little more narrow-minded, but possess a revolutionary zeal and an instinct for taking practical measures.

There is one thing more that helps bring forth the final appearance of theory - be it museology or, hopefully, more than that. The modern world we have created is approximately as old (or as young) as its museums. It is very much a shared destiny. Modern civilisation, ever seeking progress (whatever that word may mean now), tried to find the means for it in technology - with remarkable success, one has to admit. Yet, the price we are paying is too high and something is wrong. Apart from being a way to inflame the fever of consumerism, technology became a goal in itself. The same was the case with our museums which themselves became (or just remained) mere technology. Object-centred, technologically perfectionist, traditional museums (whether new or old) are unable to respond to the new needs. The situation has changed: hard technology gave way to subtle informatics and technology became clearly classified as hardware, i.e. as a means that can act only with the good reasons given by software. By separating those two, the big questions arose, and the technologists, already aware of the immense power in their hands, started to look around for a usable philosophy. This whole story remains to be told - but information society has given rise to questions that are of conceptual nature. The same division is happening in museums which are no longer necessarily regarded as self-sufficient collections of objects that speak the fact of their being, attractively displayed. Museums are also in need of the software which should direct their development, or at least keep them on the track once they take up the processes - and - awareness approach towards an active role in decision making.

The dynamic field of museums, and heritage care in general, gave rise to new needs of professional communication and professional training. The transfer of professional expertise has to be made because we are in a hurry to respond to offers for creating new museums. Advice from the experienced is solicited, and they are willing to give it. In each case the story has to be written in order to be thought.

In this definition of museums Georges-Henri Rivière called them "une famille internationale de nos jours" - "an international family of our days". (4) The complete definition, too long to quote here, is pure poetry. When it comes from a humanist so well informed in the matter, more is significant than just its length. It means that it is by itself an evasive, fugitive matter, an equation with too many unknowns.

As early as 1965, there appeared a description of the museum that I find significant enough. It reads: "it is in fact a modern hybrid, bred with the mingled characteristics of a cathedral, the royal palace, the theatre, the school, the library, and according to some critics, the department

store - - In the family of social institutions invented by man, the place of the museum is not rigidly fixed. It is pliant and can develop in many directions, or sometimes move simultaneously in several directions." (5)

Definitions are of course a form of simplification but usually correspond to the traditional museum scene which, however, is no longer the only one. Article 4 of the ICOM Statutes tries to cover the broad variety within the museum field nowadays though without much success, except that the main definition is entirely violated.

It was easy before to say that museology was the science of museums. What is it now? We no longer seem to be sure what a museum is. And, if a theory should exist, it should obviously be applicable and relevant to all these forms of institutions. But the question begs further queries. Are we indeed speaking exclusively about institutions? Do we take into consideration only the circle of recognizable museum derivations, or do we go further?

As I mentioned, the first problem in reforming museology has been overcome: Museology is not a science of museums, just as clearly as Moby Dick is not a manual on whaling. In my collection of definitions there is a variety and richness that, like any good collection, leaves the user with a very definite feeling - the way was very long and the insistence upon a limited solution counter-productive. Only in the last few years museum people have been able to accept the notion, or even the discussion, about museology. There is a clear reason for this: we have made it - almost. There is never a clear turning point - we are speaking about processes - but I think that major progress was made in 1982 thanks to ICOFOM's symposium in Paris. (6) One need only compare definitions existing before the meeting and those emerging some months after. (Like any proud father I must boast of the proposal made at the same occasion on renaming museology "heritology".) (7) The explanation was powerful enough to ring some bells, but only after six years has the term come into consideration. (8) It became evident that the difficulties definitions met with, be the term "museums" or "museology", were only to be overcome by broadening them. This has already been achieved with a certain success in the definition of museums, but, however apparent the progress may appear, which museology it was more difficult. Museums identified themselves though the tradition itself, and instead of being objective observers, they took sides and became conservative. Their authority, so intensely identified with actual power holders, was also protected by academic dignity - and as a result, they were questioned neither by the public nor by the involved intellectuals. Therefore it rather naturally developed that the theory searched for should be museum-centred. Although some new definitions of museology do call for a much wider approach, (9) they may be lacking a radicalism strong enough to push others who are still reluctant.

If museology is not a science of museums, i.e. institution-centred, then a new centre has to be found. We must find the central problem, a phenomenon if possible, and only then shall we start to see the logic in our otherwise chaotic number of centrifugal and centripetal forces. Without that analysis and the results it may bring, we shall continue holding endless discussion on whether museology is a science or not. To tell you the truth, I could not care less. It is simply there. And when you want it to be taught at a university, you certainly claim that it is. The same was claimed for pedagogy, or the history of art - and with the same powerful reasons. The whole of traditional museology is placebo museology, (10) a substitute for the real thing, a dummy pill for frustrated museum people, a lot of empty words - occasionally posing god questions. (Except of course for the museographical past. However, it was given a century to prove itself.) Museums being in crisis, as we finally admitted, could not expect more than a museology in crisis, and then it became obvious that crisis is an insufficient term for both. By definition "crisis" refers to a short duration endangering a system, whereas we ought to speak of "structural" and "conceptual" defects.

Besides, if traditional museology is not universally applicable, meaning that it only functions

regionally (a feeling of mine which could be confirmed by, say, my African colleagues), then it is wrong in essence. This may not be necessarily a crucial problem, if you consider that we have a history of art which is just as meaningless in Africa as museology. And yet, no one questions that "scientific discipline" about its right of existence.

What traditional museology lacked most, and it is felt throughout ICOFOM's activities, is a common vocabulary. This is now being developed (at least for the professional area of museums), (11) but what can we expect when we so often find that museum curators are called "museologists", even in museum magazines. In the theatre, which has a longer history, nobody calls an actor or stage director a "theatrolgist." At the other end of this extreme we have examples of excellent logical order and analysis (when following real facts) without the bestowal of the title of museologist. Instead, these individuals are called "museographers". (12) And indeed, the traditional museologist is no more than a "museumologist". Even when a sharp mind undertakes the task of making sense out of traditional museology, it fails to be convincing to the extent of common consent. (13)

Tailored to the needs of the "second wave" museums, traditional museology tried to be rationalist and positivistic, treating phenomena as finite values, comprising the notion of eternity as part of its basic structure. Built upon object-centred museums, it ended up as institution-centred - and dependent upon it.

## THE FIELD OF APPLICATION

Once museum people started to ask themselves questions, obviously with good reasons, they were looking for explanations. One can easily see this in the search for a theoretical basis. It took rather a long time to reach a critical quantity of professional frustration that heralded new ways. the "new museology" has been in existence for less than two decades. The new era that brought ecomuseums into existence coincided with another process: museum people started to look around their institutions with new awareness toward the world outside. What they saw, those who were able to look, were needs that called for a new engagement on behalf of museums; but they also saw that many others were doing the same job.

The latter is very important. There are archives, libraries, natural parks, audio-visual archives, data banks, private collections, restoration and conservation institutes; there are institutions for protection of cultural heritage and those specializing in the natural heritage. There are also schools and universities with accumulations of diverse experiences. There are still living traditions, oral, behavioural and symbolic that may be regarded as para-museal phenomena. To add to that (i.e. the newly acquired awareness of museums of similarities shared with a vast field of institutions and phenomena) the world became very interested in an unpredictable variety of exhibition productions. That gave rise to institutions using the heritage for the purpose of their precise message, for the purpose of cultural or even sensationalist enjoyment. They exist in such a quantity that the fact obviously adds a new quality to the entire picture of heritage care.

All sorts of museums without objects appeared (La Villette being an extraordinarily pure example), the museum message without using the incontestable fetish of the museum institution: the museum object. And yet La Villette stands as only the best and the latest in a line of many extant predecessors, a line that started with a revolutionary, a hero: "Exploratorium". Whatever one may claim, the fact is that they are there and they are full members of our world's professional organisation. And rightly so, if I may add.

To make the situation still more complex, we are witnessing increasing number of exhibitions set up by libraries and archives (and on their own premises). With their acquisition policy, research on and preservation facilities and their developing involvement with the public (even

including an education service), they comprise an additional kind of museum institution. It would hardly be feasible that any theory concerning museums, their working process and mission, could be hindered from spreading wherever similar activity is occurring.

Tracing the logic of the possible applicability of some museological theory, the area is ever expanding. But that expansion does not concern the described institutional or para-institutional scene alone. What about the dimension of time?

Modern traditional museums, "second wave" museums were, in spite of their scientific honesty, monuments to the ideas and myths of their owners - a class of owners. Since museums were (and many still are) just a showrooms of power, the pride of a brave conquering, enterprising world, their objectivity was always just a wishful thinking or even propaganda of their. Freed from any further ambition they were happy dealing with the distant past. When it came to touchy subjects of some concern to daily politics, a so called "theory of historical distance" was invented. In any case, when dealing with a rather unknown past the method employed was restoration and reconstruction (not so much of objects as of ideas). Such a method is by definition exposed to the risks of false conclusions. But that was perfectly acceptable. However, as we are rapidly heading towards the perils and advantages of the total information society, things are taking on more clarity: the past is anything that is not present and future, and yet, the present is just a moving red line separating opposites. So, if we speak about the time dimension of museum involvement, it is, as ever, acceptable that their concern is with the past. Yet, the notion of the past has changed. The explanation I offer here is necessarily brief but should be acceptable, as a shift in the consciousness of people and professionals alike has occurred. The paradigmatic example of EPCOT clearly shows that people adore not only the past (as we surely know), but also the future. Visions of the past attack our basic psychology - past experiences give us secure feelings of continuity, and, as a result, of identity (what a key word for the "third world civilisation"! ). But visions of the future and the "reconstructions" (!) of future experiences are equally productive - except that they give our senses a new extension, which, I am sure, McLuhan would have been happy to analyse. It surely is another version of the well-known museum identification with eternity. So, the time dimension of developing museum field is as wide as one might wish. Again, it is not the wishful invention of a museologist. In the last fifteen years of their existence ecomuseums have been establishing a new practice that included the "today" within the scope of their activity. Their practice and their theoretical impact are incontestable.

As we have mentioned, any theory including ours, should be universally applicable if it wishes to be credible. When additional museologists started to appear (which was apparent at the meeting of ICOFOM in Mexico City (14) and three years later in London (15)), the lack of a strong theory was painfully obvious. Since that time the situation has degenerated further, and if compared with, say, the Catholic church, we are now living in the fourteenth century (we have several Popes, schisms, a disoriented clergy, heresies..). However, none of these museologies proved sufficiently universal and acceptable. This in turn may say something about the reticence or even incompetence among museum people.

Totally interdisciplinary in its character, the theory we should be trying to discover is a scientific discipline about space and time, a kind of sinechology (16) but also very practical in its approach - almost like a semiology in the field of heritage, analysing syntax, semantics and the pragmatic role of the museum object in any particular museum communication.

In the face of this open dilemma much has been said about the nature of the museum object, taking very logically that it is a molecule of the museum that, once present in sufficient quantity, determines the character of a museum. The symposium at Zagreb contributed decisively to the new approach which regards the museum object primarily as information. (17) Subsequently museology came to the University of Zagreb, within the context of the department of information sciences.

## OBJECT OF MUSEOLOGY

Synkretismos is a Greek word for uniting, joining; and speaking about the object of museology much has to be incorporated to form a convincing theory and a sound basis for its stability and further development. A new museology, a science "X", provided we can no longer approve of the traditional one or readily accept anything else, is somewhat more than multidisciplinary in its character. It is indeed syncretic or even synergetic. Its field of application, wide as it is, has already been mentioned. The only obvious common denominator to all possible "users" of the new theory is a phenomenon of heritage - not only cultural, not only natural, but total. The shift from institution to phenomenon is the major change in rethinking of the concept of museology. That clearly means a need for a synergetic action of everyone involved in build up their particular theory. Therefore, new mechanisms to meet that task will be appearing, and new world-wide organisations have already appeared. (18) They are responding to the need; but given the lack of co-operativeness, and the privatisation of common interests, even new organisations miss the central problem and only worsen the rather chaotic scene of international organisations dealing with heritage. (19) The problem is omnipresent and has its counterparts in national and regional situations. If one is ready to proclaim such a discourse as fruitless intellectualism, there still remain consequences that should be taken into account. A society which has seared towards the growth of the system is subdued by entropy, it is generating entropic effects on its way towards a totalitarian and political character. On the other hand, a society that is aware of the need of having less system develops a cybernetic system to meet said entropy. In the latter instance the museum, archive or library partake in the counter-active front, very much in keeping with the logic of the democratic information society.

## CONCLUSION

One must also mention the idea of responsibility that rests with all generators of a possible synergetic action towards the new theory. The drama of constant change that we are submitted to, the era of the "Great Anxiety" (as Toffler would put it), requires action on the level of the total environment, but even then not dealing with it merely as another kind of object. What we are after are processes: to collect information about objects, to study them, to assure the durability and quality of the evidence, and to use them for the sake of enriched communication. The new science must provide us with a usable strategy for the totality of the care, protection and communication of the heritage. It thus appeared to me logical, or at least useful as a provocative call for further reconsideration of the very basis of museology, to call this science "X" *heritology*.

It would be nice to be able to answer the question posed in the title. I hope that even *trying* to do it, as in these preceding pages, counts for something. The question is so often posed that we *should* take it up. Yet, we are all trying to see beyond the explanations offered so far - those that do not persuade and provoke still more frustration. If taken for its scientific aspirations, museology does not exist. Judged by its usual content, concentrated upon the history of the museum institution, the methodology of the working process and the technology of its functioning, museology is in fact museography. Yet, whatever it is, it exists as other disciplines which do not trouble themselves that much about their scientific character. The eagerness by which it is discussed and questioned shows the amount of frustration felt in the face of some unrealized but rightful claim. What am I trying to convey? The fact of crucial

importance is that a reformed museology (heritology, if you will allow me) is a new scientific discipline is finally making its appearance. An event as rare as it is important.

After Newton's final definition of space we were left to the imperfections of his exactitude by introducing broad concepts like Einsteins's theory of relativity. I think that you can recognise the same process within the concept of museology. *Panta rei*. All the secure feeling stemming from the tangibility of our world and our museums is just one more illusion. But let us freely admit it and deal with it on the spiritual, metaphysical or supra-physical level, allowing it to continue its pragmatism (but knowing that this is not the theory we search). And finally:

If a museum object is any piece of information processed in museum or kindred institutions, or heritage-related activities, used in the transfer of experience, and  
if a museum is any creative effort of cybernetic action on the basis of the complex experience of heritage,

both of which premises I assume correct,

then museology (heritology) is a cybernetic philosophy of heritage (heritage cybernetics). It surely does not look like pragmatism: so even if the water is getting hot, there would be no need to scream. Just to think. And then to do something.

#### Endnotes:

1. Šola, Tomislav. 1987. Concept et la nature de la muséologie. *Museum*, No. 153, vol. XXXIX. Paris.
2. Noble, Joseph, former president of AAM, in an address to members of AAM.
3. Šola, Tomislav. 1983. Towards the new concept of museology. *Informatologia Yugoslavica*, br. 15. Zagreb.
4. "Le Musée: Un pavillon qui couvre bien des marchandises. Une chose déjà vieille, quand en naît le mot. Un trésor des dieux et des hommes dans ses premières temps. Un laboratoire, un conservatoire, une école, un lieu de participation, de notre temps. Une machine à collectionner, de tous temps. Avec, ou sans toit. Dont la tête avance par bonds audacieux, et la queue n'en finit pas de finir. A la courbe tour à tour exponentielle et sous exponentielle, tâche d'huile en progression ou régression à travers le monde. En synchronie dans la diachronie, et en diachronie dans la synchronie. Autour de toutes des disciplines de l'art et du savoir. Une famille internationale, de nos jours."
5. Gardner, Albert Ten Eyck. 1965. *Museums in Motion*. MET Art Bulletin, No. 24, Summer 1965.
6. ICOFOM (International Committee for Museology): Systematics and Methodology of Museology. Symposium in Paris, Musée des Arts Decoratifs, 1982.
7. Šola, Tomislav. 1982. A contribution to a possible definition of museology. A paper presented at the Symposium "Systematics and Methodology of Museology", Paris.
8. Mensch, Peter. 1987. A paper presented at ISSOM, Brno.
9. The most advanced one being that of Reinwart Academy, Leiden.
10. A term used in the text for a book "From Vanity to Wisdom".
11. *Dictionarum Museologicum*. 1987. ICOM-CIDOC, Budapest.

12. Eisenbeis, Manfred. 1972. Elements for a Sociology of Museums. *Museum*, vol XXIV, No. 2. Unesco, Paris.
13. Bureau, Jacques. 1969. *L'ère logique*. Robert Laffont, Paris.
14. General conference of ICOM, 1980, Mexico City.
15. "Museum, territory, society". ICOFOM Symposium, General conference of ICOM, 1983, London.
16. "Synechology" in this usage is mentioned in the unpublished text "Mega-trends" of our profession", 1988. Zagreb.
17. "Originals and substitutes". ICOFOM symposium, 1985, Zagreb.
18. Heritage Interpretation International (HII), for instance.

## **5. THE FUTURE OF MUSEUMS AND THE ROLE OF MUSEOLOGY TÄMÄ MUUTTUU EHKÄ, TOIMITAN NYT**

Modern civilisation has admitted to the idea that art and science are (sometimes) useless and disinterested in the practical problems of the world, because of their inability to stop certain processes or to influence them decisively. For art – where social and cognitive dissonance is directly obvious and openly commented upon – our civilization has closed the case by inventing an art that serves only itself: L'art pour l'art. Hypocritical society accepted the rationalization, art historians were happy to end the obvious challenge to their "fact"-blindness, and artists consented as it seemed to help them too. But art suffered because it was denied an active role in society. The same thing happened more or less to science, which was probably more free but now finds itself in the position of a servant, playing only the role of filling out the pattern dictated by the power-holders. Yet, we do know that this is not the inherent logic of either science or art. However disinterested in everyday practice they may seem, science and art only make sense if leading towards a change in behaviour and to new solutions to our problems. This statement is also true of philosophy which is as much science as it is art.

"Second-wave civilization", using the logic of rationalism and blinded by the conquering nature of industrialization, may have found this way of thinking usable (as it was once), but the worrisome fact is that nowadays we have to fight the same logic in very changed circumstances. The biggest restructuring of our civilization since its beginning is taking place with dramatic stresses. The logic of dialectics in our way of thinking and the idea of "feedback" is not just an intellectual invention. Out of this causality McLuhan made a transscientific law: the medium is the message. It helped us to see more clearly that a serious questioning of all social institutions in the last quarter of the century is of vital importance for the future existence of our civilization.

Museums are no exception. First, they have become re-established, after centuries of existence (but in response to different reasons), as very important. More precise questioning shows that they are not God given and that they may or even should change for reasons which are becoming more and more clear. As the drama of contemporary society gains momentum, questions are posed about all possible uses or usable possibilities that could be expected from such reformed museums. I believe that this critical mass of questions upon the future of the museum as an institution, and the quantity of proposed answers, has marked the birth of museology, which, with the exception of some pioneers, has spanned some twenty years. Futurology, which does not yet have the full status of a science, does not enable a closer examination of the nature of the museum institution, and so it was up to museum people to invent a critical approach (and that is the essence of science) to their own work and their role in society. That is why the twin themes of the future of museums and museology (if we still call this theory by that title) are so interrelated that it would be impossible to speak of them separately.

The key word in contemporary society is certainly "change", but its counterpart is adaptation. The drama is in the amount of difference between the two. Therefore, the rewording of a postulate from old Greek philosophy may be put this way: "From now on, no one will live in the world into which he was born, and no one will die in the world in which he worked in his maturity." The recent literature, and not necessarily the museological literature, is full of warnings and calls to museums (the entire conference of ICOM in 1986 had the title

*Emergency Call.* Other authors with a high sensibility as to the nature of museum venture speak of the "challenge" directed to museums and numerous professional gatherings have considered them as obliged to participate very actively in formulating the future. And that is the firm point of the new approach to museums, a place where we can watch the practice develop itself, but also the moment when we want to be sure about what is the inherent logic of our mission in human society. That implies both knowledge of the past of our institutions and a useful analysis of their present. The task is in clearly projecting the future of museums. The main circumstance is a lack of time, which is why we cannot wait to deduce from practice in the long run. And this may be the proper moment to mention the unnecessary resistance of practitioners to any theory of their job. In practice, nothing happens just because theorists want it. Theory may see a certain logic in the development more clearly, and may suggest practices to take it up, but it cannot invent everything. So its main task is to speed up information exchange, the enhancement of practical knowledge circulation and the establishment of a common vocabulary, and to build up a useful common philosophy. It is here to help, not to lead or to order. Its task, let us say, is to help the museums play a role as the mechanism of adaptation to the changed circumstances.

The real question to ask when speaking of the future of heritage does not concern museum institution exclusively. Theory suggests a new sense of order for otherwise rather chaotic practical experiences. Theory cannot be founded upon the institution, but should be focussed on a phenomenon, and that phenomenon is – clearly – heritage. This has, as I will partly show in this discourse, fundamental consequences. It means opening the door to a much broader institutional scope and even non-institutionalized action. Thus it is almost impossible or certainly incomplete to speak of the future of museums away from the entire context. What is more, we are talking about the future of our entire past: how will it proceed, in what shape and with what purposes. The past itself has to be precisely defined. While the Industrial Revolution has denied the present as a steady whole, and has transformed it into a process of a duration depending upon the new phenomenon of velocity, it was nevertheless a fluctuating zone between the past and the future. In the post-industrial era, this zone has become a moving, thin line that divides the past from the future: the past is everything that is not the future. And St Augustin would surely agree.

We do not speak any more about the past as an accumulation of objects which are natural or artificial remnants of time. They can or may be used as a way, a vehicle, but we are more concerned with human experience, collective experience, and sublime memory, that is *memoria vitalis*. Institutions, like objects and the physical testimonies they embody, are themselves just one possible form of serving the phenomenon and the logic of its existence.

New circumstances and new needs of users

Since the idea of progress as a fundamental motto of our civilization has been shamefully compromised, "we have to face the final truth about the challenges to our world".<sup>1</sup> A forgotten part of our world would certainly be the destiny of human beings. Relying to a great extent upon technology, mankind reminds me of a car in the snow which demonstrates so dramatically its incompetence and weakness when the speed pedal is hard against the floor and wheels are spinning faster and faster. The result is paradoxical: we sink deeper and deeper in the trap of our ambitions, which at the same time become hard to define.

One has to admit, nevertheless, that information technology is changing society due to a very

specific feedback, setting up some democratic processes or possibilities which otherwise would not exist. At present, identity is seen as a key word and on it we have built up a basis for further instruction of museum people and maybe even for a wider circle. The dramatically fast changes in the world in totality, together with all its innumerable parts, means a corresponding endangering of identities. Even if it may seem a new term for an old problem, the approach should be different: we should speak of identity problems in all the areas of human activity, and should speak of the identity of civilization, of nature, of cultures, etc. So, for instance, the ecological catastrophe we are witnessing now is nothing but a grandiose collapse of a complex, well-balanced identity. We also know that disappearing ecosystems have their counterpart in human society and that there are cultural disasters all over the world. In producing sterile land, we have also made some cultures sterile, and, personally, I see no difference between the acid rain harming woods, and the acid rain of Benetton, Nike, Ellesse, Coca Cola and BOSS which makes cultures disappear. On the one hand we are speaking about continuity, and that is needed for survival. On the other, we are talking about methods and agents. Whose task is it and what are the methods? Traditional theory of museum work adopted a romantic role in analysing museums. Now we see it (or we should see it) as a matter of grandiose orchestrated action.

Many concerned professionals refuse to take up the theme which, in their opinion, is either too much a lamentation or a catastrophic prophecy: they do not need prophets of cataclysm and preachers of the Last Day. And yet – whether sympathetic or not – this ostrich syndrome which they follow while it may have much style wrapped into our cultural mythology, it does not touch the vital issues of our survival. Besides, modern western culture is not much older than three hundred years. Clear or not, Malraux is right that we are living at the end of the Roman-Christian culture which Spengler also calls "Faustian". Taken as a whole, those historical cultures that seemed so eternal in their experience only lasted approximately six thousand years. Would that guarantee anything? It seems therefore correct to claim that we should try hard to see the entire past as a complex experience that may offer useful patterns for the future. The victorious campaign of western civilization was made possible by homogeneity, uniformity and continuity. Our task may seem logical if we get back to the pluralism, diversity and discontinuity of trying to reach out again to the vital forces of natural development. But in doing so we should speak about the entire world.

It is not the purpose of this essay to go further into the causes of the necessary changes to analyse the forces in society that would create them. Those tendencies and their protagonists are easily identified. What is important appears to be their new variety and the scope of their interests. In analysing our contemporary, polymorphic informational society we surely must come to many conclusions that point to a possible or necessary response. One author calls this society "the society of uncertainty"<sup>2</sup>, thus adding to the very alarming term proposed by Alvin Toffler, "The Era of Great Anxiety". Another author, speaking about the future, says the following: "Future shock is nothing more than the experience of product man lost in an age of process because he expects the future to be just a bigger past, not different. When it's not the same as they remember, people get upset."<sup>3</sup>

So – apart from speaking about important things that concern the big issues of the continuation of identity balance – we may be dealing also with problems at a psychological, and almost curative, level. These neurotic syndromes of our time call for action. The self-defense system of social consciousness, too heavily burdened, ceased to function quite long time ago, a fact that has become obvious only now. What has happened to us instead is a constant orientation towards soothing with the aid of drugs, a flight into illusions. This is a

civilizational implosion through a decadent materialism and use of vital forces only to embellish death. The adolescence of mankind, or better still, of its power holders, does not comprise the uneasiness of existential responsibility. Nowadays it may have become obvious that the main feature of the nature of museum institutions (and other similar institutions) is the mission of continuation: Whatever they contain or speak of, their task is to continue. It certainly looks rather up-to-date as an explanation, and it is, when explained, but we recognize this as a striving for the eternity of the institution. It is one of the most universal primary impulses, and when applied to social and cultural values, they become unbearably ambitious and even ruthless in achieving their aims. New museums which are just new in their architecture and technology applied just become more effective in this vanity affair. But they may also be new in their conception and may have a very responsible attitude which goes as far as reforming their own public, so that, all together, they do the real job. And the real job is quality of living, tolerance, dignity of diversities, etc.

The First World War ended the "cosmic optimism" (as Toffler puts it) of the 19th century. A short period of the new faith ended in the holocaust of the war that followed. People never managed to adjust to the frantic growth of the post-industrial revolution era and continued to live spiritually holding on to past values. It does not even look like a crisis, as some are likely never to catch up. Insecurity is the result. People need reassurance and a feeling of certainty. We find ourselves in the cockpit of a flying jet, with no one around, and with only a car driver's licence in our pocket.

Our situation is certainly more complex than that, but it may end in a very simple tragedy. The discontented world is trying to cure itself and regain balance and command by inventing all sorts of new skills and theoretical bodies. It is not just a trend, it is a movement along a path that is not supposed to be dead-ended. The heritage science we are talking about is just one of the skills, probably with much wider aspirations. The task that I would like to assign to it is to encompass everything within the same area of preservation of the past including all the parallel and alternative ideas. People need the synthesis of diverse data, information and knowledge into a plausible experience which helps understanding and living. They are offered too much which is useless – a puzzle with parts that no one meant to match. There is more knowledge in the world than ever before, yet one could say it is just the opposite with wisdom. That may be true or not, prudence surely does not correspond with the available memory. There is obviously a process in production that we miss, a phase where data is combined into information and where an information collage produces a message. Who is going to produce that message? Certainly not the traditional museums. People need awareness of the processes surrounding them, they need useful understanding of the world in which they live in order to accept it. They are so deeply conditioned by the traditional context they are educated in that they refuse everything that does not fit the secure old pattern. So museums, for instance, have the double task of changing themselves and galvanizing their public to use museums for their natural requirements.

We need institutions and actions which would make hope possible again. We also need institutions which would be convincing in arguing corrections to what is being done with identities in the world. As users we need to counteract, that is, to oppose and prevent, a direct action. The mentality of constant profit with no concern for other people's future is spreading beyond the class of powerholders. Any of these actions can be undertaken only with the help of the past: experience, arguments, directional signs – if the past survives, we shall survive. As the needs are rather clear, the logic will guarantee that someone will fulfil them. It is still curious to see how blind museum people are, thinking that they are alone in charge. The past

is a well where anybody who is thirsty can find fresh wisdom.

### Theory – helping the future happen

It has never been clearly said, but it may seem logical after the previous pages, that theory (as the time goes by) takes on a much more active attitude. Its ambition is not really creation, but a certain catalytic role. And this is a rather slippery aspiration, as theory may become a dangerous misunderstanding if directly applied to practice. Yet, the time is passing and the need to catch up with some processes is steadily growing. In this respect, with all the misunderstandings we have experienced, our civilization is the first and unique; as Malraux has said, it has been "the first to separate the unattainable from religion and superstition so as to be able to ask questions".<sup>4</sup> And when Malraux explains himself writing about the Imaginary Museum, one could probably add some contemporary experiences, or substitute some ready experiments where he has only vaguely pointed the direction. Personally – even without speaking about the theory as of a *religio curatoris* – I would pronounce him a prophet of the entire field of heritage protection. It was he who put the art at the end of the development: The Imaginary Museum, he suggested, announces the existence of some era of "art in front of which we have stayed perplexed ever since we could not identify it with immortality".<sup>5</sup>

An analysis of the history of heritage institutions shows their development characterized by convergence; instead of former divided areas and utter diversification, we speak of their tasks within shared *areas of resonance*. Therefore, in response to an institutional configuration that consists more and more of custom-programmed institutions, the immediate impression is of the uselessness of rules (some so-called sciences achieved that status rather elegantly the moment they created the critical mass of rules and models). Museums began as memory, then became more explicitly treasuries (a tendency retained throughout further development); the next phase was curiosity and science, and then they took up more evocative values and become concerned more and more with the age and historical values. In my opinion we are, for the majority of tendencies, within the era of documenting values, still nourishing the idea of prestige and importance. A rather paradoxical position: those are our museums but made because of the others. It is like draining the budget to the bottom, and buying a fancy car just to make the neighbours jealous. With museums it is much more serious. No wonder people are happy with this change in the museum world because it is more keen than ever to follow us and "take notes". But where are we going? A responsible curator must ask the question and demand an answer. Without being too pathetic one may say that this obedient documenting could become interesting or useful if there were still anybody to use it. Sometimes it is not enough to document, but necessary to oppose and correct. If museums have the knowledge and the accumulated experience of the past, should not *they* be obliged to use it for the better good of society? If our theory explains that fact with good, sound arguments, it might compel museum people to open the windows of their marble temples – and I say I would love it. Then we can talk about the future. And, besides, any future is more beautiful than the past. We, as intellectual beings that are given the gift of dream, may finally appreciate that only the future holds promises. Closed within the pattern of dead-end streets of our present, we lose the ability and the will to foresee and predict, and it creates "a lack of feedforward (which) estranges us from ourselves".<sup>6</sup>

A new theory (I refuse to talk about any that we know) must have the quality to explain the past logically, it must fit the present and it surely must be useful for the future. Even speaking

about the destiny of museums, separately from all similar problems, gives us a appropriate opportunity to affirm the legitimacy of the theory itself. Indeed, any sort of speculation upon the future of institutions must use intellectual apparatus, and that is, by definition, science. Theory does not perform prophecy. It gathers knowledge, analyses it and draws up conclusions. As pronounced in the title, theory helps practice to move faster, sometimes indicating what the focus of action could be. The appearance of theory is a response to the speed of changes. Jules Verne, for example, as McLuhan tells us,<sup>7</sup> failed to predict the right time of the appearance of television, which according to him should have happened in the 29th century. Thus, it would be imaginable that professional speculation would never gain enough importance in a slower world to aspire to or earn the status of science. But circumstances which lead to having a theory are far from being exclusively professional. Nevertheless, establishing a theory to respond to new circumstances implies the necessary confidence in the protagonists. What may be proposed is also a "hypothetical leap"<sup>8</sup> – anticipation stemming from intuition.

Much in the future for which we are trying to prepare ourselves, will be dependent upon the use of technology. We have accepted technology in all *heritage institutions*, but so far we are as a whole successfully resisting its full impact. It has not changed the nature of the majority of heritage institutions. Like Kenneth Hudson says: "They are doing the same old thing using new means". Technology has ever been a destiny of our civilization and of its museums alike. What we expect theory to do is to clarify that relationship, to advise the right level of usage and the right ways of usage. On a more general level, the importance of technology lies within the total change of circumstances. Technology has a rather clear perspective of its abilities, but the practice of our heritage institutions is not able to adjust to present possibilities. Technology offers much more than the prospect of greater recording capacities and faster retrieval. It will go, on one hand, towards still more high-fidelity in reproducing reality, but on the other hand, it will suggest and *offer* enormous flexibility for any *creative* usage. It may increase still further the level of museum hyperrealism, which in itself is a vice and is a quality of modern museums. Part of the problem is the fact that a museum (for instance) focuses upon different details and situations of reality with such complete insight that one always discovers in these presentations more than reality gives away. As technology offers us the constant temptation of seeing behind the usually obvious and beneath the usually exposed, so this hyperrealism becomes a significant element of any theoretical speculation and, well in accordance to MacLuhan's rule, changes the nature of institution(s).

As things are now, technology only adds to the chaos of massive knowledge by bringing more technology. It is the human factor that blocks the profit from it. It is rather obvious, if not logical, that perfection, ability and capacity all deal with quantity and not with quality. That *technological trap* (any technology may be taken for its own sake and may be self-serving like administration for instance) is inevitable if we let ourselves be guided by it. To avoid it we need a *know-how* that treats itself with a critical, analytical apparatus and with the analysis of professional experience. And that is theory.

We are speaking of a "society of total information", a society that comprises a balance that we seem to be losing for good. Heritage institutions should become a substantial mechanism in keeping the balance there and should play an active role in this process. As far as heritage action is concerned (be that institutional or informal), it will itself balance between the extremes of technological hyperrealistic perfection and the extreme of the most relaxed village-like informality: between the total illusion and the most down-to-earth preoccupation

with the "quotidiana". Technology will always impose itself, but if we do not yield totally, we may augment our chances of returning to the mythological, poetical, irrational and non-functional. Thus gaining the balance through the creative process.

A big dividing paradigm of rationalism, as one author puts it, that confronted science and philosophy, materialism and idealism, facts and values, governed in the 18th century and its dominance is decreasing only now. The future will be again the time of a great synthesis. The man of the future will integrate in his spiritual and practical life the past and the present.

A long explanation would probably be more convincing in throwing some light on the creative future of heritage institutions, their close relation to art and their art-like functioning. The close similarity between art and museum message has already been mentioned in literature, but there is still some way to go for heritage institutions. Like art, they have to become a unity of Dionysian and Apollonian principles. Art is, as Nietzsche tells us, "the most complete acceptance of life and the highest evidence of man". Nietzsche adds also that art is a real meaning for living because "the world and the existence gain their justification only as an aesthetic problem. Only thanks to art existence becomes bearable, truth becomes bearable and overcoming of pessimism becomes possible". He may well have talked about museums, provided that art and aesthetics be mentioned and related to communication processes and not to, say, the way individual objects are treated in exhibitions.

The new theory that tries to help the usable future of heritage institutions happen will succeed in establishing that a museum job, a curatorial job for instance (especially the one within communication processes), is inevitably a creative one. One day, it will become evident that for communication work in museums and institutions alike, one will certainly have to be not only educated, but also talented. Heritage institutions will become highly *informatisé* augmenting their documentation capacity almost to perfection. But to make real profit out of it, they will become the eighth art – a mixture of documentation centre, traditional museum, library, theatre, creative workshop and leisure facility. New institutions will be different from the models we have in mind; custom institutions, created according to necessarily specific circumstances to respond to naturally specific needs, will deny any rule we would like to establish. They will grow where the real need is and out of specific environment.

The nonsense of division between movable and immovable heritage will disappear when confronted with free action. What will matter will be entity (the identity in its broadest possible interpretation and context) that needs continuation. Heritage institutions will be more and more the core of action trying to make things happen where they are needed, where they have the biggest impact. Their goal, in a very art-like manner, would be to have the process happen in people's minds. There, and only there, the heritage action (be it institutional scene or more than that) wishes to find itself. Heritage action will try to act as a guru of a new (or newly discovered) spiritual sphere, reaching the points of awareness and wisdom, which will put question any need of institutions or directed orientation. The aim is unattainable, like any ideal, but so was the down-to-earth attitude of traditional museums; their addiction to material evidence, to simple prestige and to superficial aesthetics was vain as it could only be. Yet the goal was nothing less but eternity. It is teaching the rhinoceros how to fly. Joffre said with elegant simplicity the beautiful truth: "Our only eternity is mankind."

Heritage institutions and heritage actions will finally be able to justify the imposing potential of technology, using it creatively for their goals. They will prove that technology has still to be discovered: the medium of museums to which it has been proposed and by which it has

been misused did not take the challenge of its full capacity. One has to know, however, that the future will be benevolent as is suggested by the very logic (not idealism this time!), which means that it will be eclectic in approach and will leave all the concepts live as long as they can prove their productiveness. And there will always be people who would rather be using a laser for digging the ground than for its inherent performances.

The future of museums has to contend with the phenomenon of death, as it is a part of our life-cycle. By doing so, it will be possible to break with the exhausting obligation to keep the physical evidence alive. And it will enable us also to search for eternity where we can find it. This also comprises the death of museums and similar institutions, ideally, through their fulfilment – through their closing the circle and coming back to life, thus decreasing the need for them. Even if we consent to the materialistic logic of traditional heritage institutions, creating a pharaoh's grave for some other afterlife, or for some other life which might come, we see now that the traditional way has outlasted itself. Before the spaceship Earth sinks, to paraphrase Buckminster Fuller, we should launch some lifeboats in the cosmic ocean. What can we or what shall we take with us? The idea is: everything that we are, in the totality of time and space, but the trunkspace available will necessarily call for a very sublime baggage.

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#### Endnotes

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## 6. An Introduction To Mnemosophy

as the general theory of heritage

The crisis of museology is long as its existence. This hundred years<sup>1</sup> of solitariness was spent in an ambiguous "status nascendi"<sup>2</sup>, a state of never being born. Yet, only in the last three decades, with a few exceptions though, we can read relevant theoretical testimonies about our profession. What we had before was historic factography with no attempt to offer a value judgement: museums were judged only by the quality of their collections and curators by their scientific capacity. The number of museum professionals able to give solid, critical and convincing account of their profession, analyzing its nature, its role in the society is steadily rising. Whether they consider(ed) themselves museologists or just concerned professionals matters little indeed, as museology exists any time the critical and structured transfer of the professional experience happens – the action aimed at the advancement of the profession and its service to the society.

Why did museology appear?

The hundred years of ill success of theoretical endeavour would not be enough to produce alone the long expected change. The decisive impulse came from the crisis of practice. The professions of heritage care and communication started to need the usable answers to the questions their tormented position imposed. Compared to anything they used to experience this was partly caused by too much success. This time the set of the questions the theory was supposed to answer were practical in the sense that they were referent to the changing position of museums in the society. Anything that would explain and justify that position of museums (re-defining their social role) is bound to appropriate, in some latter instance, a shape of sound theory and cause radical conceptual consequences. For a quarter of century, this reflective critique of practice is producing a gradual change of the whole configuration of heritage concerned professions<sup>3</sup>. On that way, the reflection appropriates structure, standards, criteria and vocabulary which signal the coherence needed for any distinctive discipline. What we live through is the biggest re-conceptualization of (dealing with) the past that ever happened, a matter too important to be left solely to practice. This discipline is born any time the collective experience of profession(s) is used, supplemented or transferred to others.

The basis of change

Museology was perceived as theory of the museum institution whereas it had to be concept based if counting upon any endurable coherence. The appearing concept was heritage in its totality, from dinosaur to Andy Warhol. This common-denominator-notion still did not reach its full, fruitful legitimacy in the museum world: only ten years ago the discussions whether the term heritage refers solely to cultural heritage were still vivid even in the trans-disciplinary international body like the International Committee of museology (ICOFOM, ICOM). The world's museum organization (ICOM), trans-disciplinary by the very existence, is going through a decade of stagnation whereas the museums and kindred institutions flourish like never before. The objective reasons are contained in a general lack of philosophy of heritage which leaves the entire sector rather defenseless in the face of competition, temptations and corruption of the modern world. The common denominator means: the similar conceptual basis, similar definition of the object, similar role in the society. It must be

that the entire institutional configuration in the field of heritage shares the same general ideals of its fulfillment that run any true profession.

This broad concept includes obviously other institutions<sup>4</sup> from the field of heritage that do at least one part of the triple natured museum job: collectioning, care, presentation. It would be hard to find any institution devoted solely to collectioning and what it comprises (knowledge of the subject, research), or to the care (preservation, conservation, restoration). The presentation, on the contrary, is quite often performed as an exclusive activity and one could regard different exhibition centres as a sort of temporary museums. The range of institutions around the same concept of heritage increases still significantly if we open up the notion of the object collected, cared for or presented. If museums collect only the three-dimensional objects as material evidence of some past, we stick to traditional definitions and allow no change. If museums also collect ideas, material objects being only one form of them, then only the concept of evidence decides what is a museum object. What is an evidence of past events, people, ideas, situations, deeds...? Anything that possesses scientific reliability, ethical relevance and quality of emitting its information potential when appropriately presented or demonstrated<sup>5</sup>. Further on, the informatic society created the context in which museum tradition could only consent to regarding the information on a museum computer as yet another aspect of museum object or, as the reality brings it, as an object by itself. Wherever the broad concept of heritage represents the departure point in the activity, we are entitled to expect the same, general theoretical consequence.

Some more arguments within the broadening filed

There are still more practical circumstances to this unity, which theory (or science) can signal, inspire, enhance, spread: mission, legislation<sup>6</sup>, networking, ethics, professional education<sup>7</sup> and partnerships.

Idealist goal of any profession, when structured and supported by organization and management, defines its mission. Using the collective memory for the better understanding of present and preparation of usable future is easily aiming at quality of living within a frame of a balanced development, that can easily apply to many an institution. Yet, all will readily define their methodology but only a few would seriously study their mission. Since they have no clear ideals and maximum expectations, no wonder they do not achieve optimal results. On the other hand, to know one's mission requires full knowledge of the basic concept, ability of critical self-analysis, and de-institutionalized mind.

Legislation defines the place of the professions in the social and political organization of the society. If bad, it can cause drawbacks: social (e.g. that the institution is discouraged from serving the minorities), financial (e.g. that other programmes and institutions get more as being better positioned in the public offer)<sup>8</sup>, professional (that profession is neglected and backward, lacking standards and norms, disoriented etc.). Networking is aimed at functioning together, sharing the resources as well as responsibilities with a sole aim to do more and better, for the society or community, with less strain and less means.

Ethics is hardly perceived as important as it seem to have no practical consequence<sup>9</sup>. Yet ethics assures pride and emotional stability of profession(s); the constant effort to improve it will necessarily embetter the service: ethics affirms responsibility and represents the only basis for an idealist goal - a glowing orientation point in discouraging practical circumstances.

If perceived correctly, only the ethical definition of the museum service, to take one example, will firmly define museum as community oriented institution.

Heritage professions need their common theory to understand the nature of their medium, to grasp the spread-up of the concept of heritage, to be able to form their own mission, to create a conceptual basis of their involvement wherever the heritage is, to be accountable partners, to state administration, to business and to hypermedia; they need the theory to create strategy of accomplishing their mission, assuring thus their own survival. If they do not see clearly their own strength and weakness, they will give harmful responses to the offers of the other sectors, requiring too much or too little in any proposed deal. They should be able to take full responsibility for the public welfare they keep and represent so that it gains value and stays under control of democratic forces of society.

What theory?

Would a theory be able to take up such a set of ambitions or the name of science is more appropriate, it depends upon definitions. Politics, which is (ideally speaking) principles, methods, and practices of government, hardly a science in its own right, has its own philosophy. Why shouldn't heritage?

This may belong to the third phase of museological ambition. In the first, museology was the history of collections and museum institutions. Then it became further concerned with methods, techniques and technology of museum work and started as reflection upon institutional services and professional matters, including ethics. In that second phase of development, we have witnessed the tendency of seclusion between practical matters (which were supposed to be museography) and "theoretical" which were destined to acquire the status of science i.e. museology. This later meant also the transfer of professional experience. The third phase, which we are establishing for a decade at least, is continuing the museological development establishing it as history of past, cybernetics of human experience, and philosophy of heritage. Any conception of science will comprise double movement – of theory towards the practical experience and of practical experience towards the theory. Although it may seem that the third concept describes the needed theory as rather esoteric, it indeed derives its motives from the very practice and, consequently, admits the verification by practice.

Introducing mnemosophy

Leaving the methodological field, where some practical solutions to specific problems are found, we move towards the substantive field. What Museography, Librarianship, Archivistics or Informatics have as specific differences, will rarely be obvious at the utter speculative level of their proper field. But to go that far means the loss of professional identity (like leaving one's own fortress in troubled times) and the risk of incompetence (as multidisciplinary approach requires fair insight). Yet, they all share the same subject which is information pertaining to the past human experience, its creation/acquisition, analysis, care and dissemination. The scientific community entrusted museology with the status of science by allowing it to the Universities. Yet, it is far from being a rule<sup>10</sup>. Museology, in whatever variant taken, is still disregarded and surely not among "mature" or "compact"<sup>11</sup> sciences; it is rather "diffuse" and quite a "discipline to be". But, so are many other, well established and yet

neither prepared to admit it, nor disposing with such capacity of development.

It is obviously about an information science, one that should be among other "cultural sciences" (like linguistics, ethnology or history of art), "soft" (Hagstrom, 1965) humanistic sciences as opposed to "hard" sciences (which are hard, as we are told, due to the level of impersonal in citation and capability of demonstrating their theories and laws in mathematic formula (Storer, 1967)<sup>12</sup>. Sciences grow and change, and others (usually transdisciplinary) are conceived: this way biotechnology has been created or even such an amalgam as sociobiology. Most of these new disciplines appropriated "gestalt" approach which is very "soft" indeed in its ambition to understand wholeness in things and concepts, admitting that the whole is more than the mathematical sum of its parts. The modern sensibility, which is so attracted by holistic views derives from it the religion of modern atheists as well as ecological concern. The things and the ideas seem to be so definitely interlocked that analytical paradigm obviously failed.

In that sense, we need an etiology, a science which will be able to understand the causes of our dependency upon the past. We need a dialectics of heritage to understand the laws that govern its changes and our expectations from it. Unlike museology, this general theory should be an ontology of heritage institutions, not concerned with their history but the philosophy of their inception. We need a sinechology, able to embrace the dimensions of space and time and beyond them. It should not though be just another, all inclusive, theosophy, but enough to understand the logic of material world, maybe a sort of metaphysics as "the part of philosophy that deals with the nature and structure of reality" (Aristotle). The idea of having the concept of heritage in the metaphysical "high country of the mind"<sup>13</sup> looks ambitious enough for a theory with so many aspirations. Ideally speaking, Komensky's utopian science of Pansofia, contains some key words of our idealist construction. Its ambition was to present the results of the entire human knowledge with a social and psychological objective of creating harmonious community of all people. The dozen encyclopaedic, gigantic, museums of the western hemisphere, harmonize with both the scientific and the ethical ideals of Komensky.

Visionaries and utopians always tried to attain some level of "scientia generalis" (Leibnitz) which would synthesize results of all the sciences (Kropotkin). David Hume was trying to establish a "science of man", about human nature and the limits of human spirit. What we may rightfully strive for is a science about relation of man to his realities, the past and present. The relation is always there, but not subdued to the criteria of quality. If museums and kindred institutions are just about collective memory, things are so simple that cyber-space would make all those institutions obsolete. Are we asking for too much? Utopia is, in a strange way, part of museum reality as museums try to keep alive the past by preserving the material fragments of decontextualized, ultimately unknown reality. Modern science was born as discovery of infiniteness, and yet, we try to prove in our museums the finite and definitely material nature of our worldly reality as the scientific and sole truth. We need a science which would also function as a hermeneutics of past, able to decode and give meaning to the inherited signs. We need principles of interpretation, beyond the clues given by each specialist science. In this respect, an individual, specialist analysis of a particular object should not exist without a parallel strive to understand the wholeness it makes the part of. This general science would excel the ambition of specialist sciences by undertaking the idealist ambition towards understanding of humans' "being-there" (Heidegger). Demonstrating the multi-faceted nature of an ideal science of heritage, let us remember that hermeneutics, itself a possible aspect of it, was constituted as a science of understanding the historical reality, of understanding the

world's experience (Hans Georg Gadamer). Besides, like heuristics, this new science should also teach us "methods" of researching new concepts and art of finding the truth. Once a separate body, this science of heritage, composite as it may be, could derive its coherence from practical use it may have in assuring that we profit most from the past.

When saying "heritage" museums and other institutions have usually meant the heritage stored in their premises – the heritage they have accumulated. But, what about the remaining 70 %? Or less? Be that as it may, most of that "un-stored" past has become someone's heritage, personal or group, and it is being acquired, kept, researched and disseminated. The lack of any standards of excellence and scientific responsibility for the most of it does not make it irrelevant. Placing the concept and not the institution in the middle of our concern, we see that institutions are only one solution to saving the past and, indeed, only part of the past. Unlike the useful memory of the primitive society – transferred to the living and those to come in the form of artistic expression – this heritage is largely artificial. A past, namely, becomes heritage once we are aware of its value and once we manipulate it to become such. Selected and structured according to current value systems it becomes official heritage.

The general theory of heritage will have to be applicable to any heritage not just the official one. Once elaborated to the possible extent, it may inspire and assist the great conceptualization of the world and assure the conceptual shares of concerned professions.

With this comes another recantation: the science is not the paradise of certainty but a hell of mere probabilities. So called "theory of chaos" is a tacit admission from the part of Physics and Mathematics that the System must be there but we cannot grasp its regularities nor to understand its ultimate nature. This is hardly hinted in the temples of Certainty<sup>14</sup>. Even the physicists had to accept the heresy that there are physical things and phenomena which cannot be proved by experiment. In its final claims, Physics always liked to use the metaphor. Therefore, the science of heritage might well allow itself the lack of finiteness and bravely claim an openness of the system, able to anticipate the future, but already appearing circumstances.

The outline of mnemosophy

It will certainly look preposterous and exaggerated to ask for so much from a supposed science. Yet, aspirations should not be forbidden, so much more as harsh practice and a search for consensus will form their final profile.

When the term "heritology" was mentioned for the first time it was literally laughed out<sup>15</sup>. But the third museological paradigm was much on its way. Its concerns were becoming different: the very meaning of heritage and its institutional concept, the mission of heritage related profession(s), the needs of users (community, society), and perception of institutions as of system units of heritage action (meaning that institutions as we know them are only one and changing possibility of an institutional answer to a need). By that time already, museology was splitting into several museologies, the development reaching its summit in the last few years.<sup>16</sup> Heritology was a welcome provocative thesis to end the useless academic discussion which was much away from practical causes of any theoretical endeavour. In the last ten odd years arguments for a radical brake with a century of museological frustration only augmented even as far as terminology.

A long practice of telling a puzzling story of genesis of museums from the temple of muses never clarified the possible derivation. None of the seven Muses was dedicated to anything like museum. It is their mother, by Zeus, Mnemosyne that should have come into mind instead. The daughter of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaea (Earth), Mnemosyne is personification of Memory, a goddess of it. What we deal with in "arts of heritage" is memory and what we discuss in our theory of heritage is but qualities of that memory, including the quality use of it. The earlier classical mythology offers the possibility of terminological linkage, through Muses, though not to the proper name of the institution (a third of today's museum institutions are not museums anyhow), but to the central concept itself, – the memory. Formerly, the Muses were only three, out of which the first two were "in charge" of song and meditation and the third one, Mneme, was concerned with memory. This fact was not unnoticed so we have mnemonics (the art of improving or developing the memory), but also "mnemism", a theory of memory by E.Hering which says that any organized matter has the memory<sup>17</sup> as its basic biological function.

The philosophy of heritage is not a science of collective memory, but the one selected and valued as necessary for survival of certain identity. The neologism mnemosophy would imply the memory and the quality of it: *sophia* means wisdom. If we can object scientism and possessiveness to museums, we can regard hypermedia as insatiable, unselective *omnivora*, and both are quite at ease with any quantitative analysis upon a sound basis of the official science. The old-fashioned call for wisdom is suggesting the quality as the only solution to the "easy" quantitative solutions. This, discipline should offer a common frame for all other specialist disciplines in the field of heritage, as their metaphysical super structure. Before we discuss its structure and other elements as it may contain them, let us claim that this philosophical discipline has for its aim the understanding of the essence and value of entire heritage. One should probably prefer the term as proposed, since this should not be only the study, the science of heritage (mnemology?) but rather a science about the usable, quality substance of heritage. Even in broadest interpretations, museology suggested the ideal of unlimited memory as a perfect recall with no value judgment<sup>18</sup>, avoiding thus the ethical responsibility and earning to its unprepared self an easy access to the crowded informatic superhighway. There would be always quite a few museum specialists who will intimately consider museums scientific institution (even if the science has to be presented to the public) and they will tolerate museology which can be interpreted as professional experience dealing with standards, methodology and management of institutions. That discipline stresses no creativeness, ethics and responsibility as deals with the formal side of the profession (so foolishly called practical). Besides being the information science, mnemosophy should also be the cybernetics of heritage as it has the active principle inbuilt in its structure. Memory serves as survival tool and a basis for a coordinated response of the society, community, or a group when confronted with a situation, stimulus, challenge or aggression tending to disturb its normal condition or function. Memory is the basis for *homeostasis* of the identity, the complex balance which, if maintained, enables the harmonious change or development. Since this does not happen in a spontaneous way but is "engineered" through different institutions of the modern society, heritage institutions have to produce the filtered, adjusted, selected, appropriate *wisdom* to generate the proper reaction aimed at regaining the balance. Therefore, it isn't just any memory that restores lost harmony as a condition of successful survival. Wasn't Aristotle suggesting "the wisdom of the world" as a separate science? The philosophy may have forgotten the simple meaning of "-sophia" (wisdom) yet it is, ultimately speaking, nothing else that we are after. Needless to say, this approach changes radically the optic and mentality of present institutional tradition. It involves, namely, as the daily practice, the risk of institutional action in the real time and living circumstances i.e. taking part of

responsibility for the destiny of the identity the institution stands for. Finally, the birth of community museums (ecomuseums) coincided with the conviction that museums bear their part of responsibility for the development of the society. The notion of sustainable development, i.e. the one that retains balance and variety of vital forces, justifies well the notion of museum as a cybernetic mechanism of a society<sup>19</sup>, and the theory that supports and assists such mechanisms.

To the configuration of museums, libraries, archives, sites, parks and alike, mnemosophy as syncretic discipline, should strive to answer the main questions that arise from these disciplines, much to the same list as would be proposed by journalist procedure: WHAT is heritage? WHAT are the historical changes of the idea of the past and that of heritage? WHEN did they happen, WHY and in WHAT circumstances? WHY is heritage collected, kept and stored? WHO stores WHAT ? WHO is in charge of heritage? In WHOSE name? WHO should be served and HOW? WHAT is the future of the past?

Creativity taken into account  
(see the diagram enclosed)

Traditional heritage institution was formed as the end of the process of musealisation. The mystery of immense past was arbitrarily transformed into the classified, taxonomic quantity of museum or archival collection. Even scientific procedure could be arbitrary (as might already be obvious), but individual collectionneur's interest is, as a rule. Thus, majority of museums came into being without exact reference to some identity, let alone to the complexity of the reality of past. The entirely random nature of birth of museums is much corrected in modern times leaving the transformation to the scientific knowledge of curators. One has to know, however, that museum curator rarely creates science but follows it, choosing and structuring his or hers collection to illustrate, not the reality but the scientific view on it. Therefore, science is the authority which justifies the choice made. As result, the meta-reality of museum corresponds to a certain extent with the departing reality of the past. Devouring the future and producing more and more past, which is then put into museums, the world is turning into an immense museum. Once in secure hide of storage, the past becomes a reality of heritage. Researched and drastically selected once again (to form some 15 %, on an average, of the original quantity) it is then presented in this form to the public. The public, besides fellow professionals – itself well selected, cultured and conditioned by the education – comes regularly to meet the Eternity exposed in the glass cases. Once out of the museum, it feels fascinated, knowledgeable, and secure being convinced in the omnipotent nature of science. Idyllic, but false.

The museum, contrary to traditional notion, does not happen in museum but in the visitor's mind. Like in any real theatre, the revelation, the ecstasy, happens by the stage but not on it. Thus, museum is not the end but the intermediary, the transmitter, selector and amplifier, a medium and means. The process of musealization implies making choice, using analogy and abstraction, scientific knowledge and common sense respectively. But any act of choice, as known in physics or art, is necessarily a creative act. There is no way to avoid the fact as only "one-to-one" map assures accuracy but becomes ridiculous<sup>20</sup>. The process of musealisation implies, therefore, the creative responsibility. If it is there, and as inevitable, it should be explored and used to the advantage of the professional effectiveness.

But, since museum institution is not an aim in itself, the counter-balancing process to

musealisation is communication. It is the finishing part of the mediating role of heritage institutions. It should happen as a process of interchange, guided by the vital forces of development, life itself that is, and by the affective principle. If the professional on one side does not love the user on the other, and vice versa, the collaboration stands little chances as it ends up in cultural cliché. Inaptitude of institutions to take part in creative forces of living culture is the sign of their obsolescence and decadence of the society itself. A mission defined in broad strategic arguments of the survival, serves the purpose well, as there the theory acts as incentive of constant adjustment of institution to the context and needs. Working hard upon this dynamic quality of heritage institutions transforms them into (one of the) guiding mechanisms of contemporary society. Able to receive the signals, to analyze them and select answers then emitted to the community of users, heritage institutions use the wisdom as filtered, sublimated knowledge - as catalyst, enzyme and hormone to produce corrective effects, to acquire transparency and arguments for democratic decision-making. Knowledge can easily be useless, messages can become dangerous, but the creative dialogue that links the collective experience to present day needs rarely misses. Some years ago this seemed mere intellectualizing but now the whole concept of sustainable development depends upon these subtleties.

Any heritage institution is double-natured theatre: that of facts and of fiction. The factual side is scientifically sustained process of musealisation, whereas the "fictional" part pertains to communication, emission – performance. Of course this part could not be properly done in a museum where curators are academic specialists who learned their museum job on the spot by an old method of "sitting next to Sally". This is why the need ushered architects, designers, media experts, artists, actors, stage directors, light engineers – and consultants able to direct the entire production. The heritage "business" becoming complex in booming, will mean that the profile of new experts will form around the need. To remind ourselves, the creativity here is double: that of performance (stage, script, dramatization) and that of effects (study of public and their needs, ways of mutual influence). Unlike the true theatre, heritage institution has to base its entire production upon scientific factography, but this isn't much of a difficulty once the dialog with the science is opened.

What heritage institutions perform is the transfer of wisdom, made possible through para-artistic quality of heritage communication. Even if compared to art it demonstrates some conspicuous similarities: the same source of inspiration (identity) the same capacity (creativity), the same method (interpretation) and the same quality objective (communication, as giving and taking). Since creativity means art and ethical standpoint, both mean responsibility. This position of serious partner able to request autonomous status from the state administration and ready to negotiate usable terms with corporate business is something that suggests a strong professional background. This, however, cannot be achieved without convincing and ambitious body of theory. It might have been ridiculous that only museum people and peasants had no any job training before starting to earn their living from it, but it has become impossible to retain this curious luxury any more – at least for museum people. Learning how to transform the immensity of past human experience into usable wisdom and learning why, how and to whom offer these glittering nuggets might comprise composing some mnemosophy. According to the counter active satisfaction of any cybernetic thinking, the proposal makes sense even if it only corrects the present insufficiencies of the institutional field of heritage.

by Tomislav Šola, 1995.

- 1 Neickelius, C.F. used the term "museographie" already in 1727, signaling correctly its substance.
- 2 Stransky, Z. Zbynek used the term in his numerous texts upon the scientific status of museology.
- 3 What Mathilde Bellaigue calls "les grandes étapes successives": Santiago de Chile, Lourmarin, Le Creusot, Quebec.
- 4 See the diagram no. 1, explaining the "copernican" change by which the centre of the theoretical speculation is not the museum institution but the concept of heritage.
- 5 The interpretation effort involved all secondary museum material (diorama, models, charts, diagrams, illustrations, photography, informatic recording, audiovisual information etc.). The need for the context and for the comparison (as any instructive method would necessarily require) changed further the nature of museum object towards ephemeral and ordinary.
- 6 In North America, where changes happen earlier, the theory seems to be less important but the practice precedes it well pushing towards the broader, all embracing schemes; in U.S.A. Preservation Act (1966) was first of the regulations that started the evolution: National Register of Historic Sites, Advisory Council on Historic Places (1978), Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service at the Department of Interior (showing thus the widening tendency, both terminologically and fictionally); the same development, which is topped by CHIN (Canadian Heritage Network) can be traced in Canada.
- 7 In the last decade there is growing number of places where professional education (usually at post-graduate level) is offered cumulatively to the variety of future professionals from museums, art galleries, archives, historic sites, libraries, interpretation centres heritage planning groups and to those from similar institutions: Advance Studies in Cultural Resource Management (University of Victoria, Canada); École du Patrimoine (France); Reinwardt Academy (Netherlands); University of Zagreb (Croatia) etc.
- 8 That goes specially to heritage entertainment business, heritage parks, science centres and alike which attract crowds of visitors and attract more easily public and private funding.
- 9 The usual level of treating the theme is the professional conduct and legislation; one could claim that all that would logically derive from ethical understanding of the nature and role of the museum institution in the society. For some novelties in this development see the book mentioned in the note 10.
- 10 Edson, Garry ed. 1995. Museum Ethics. Routledge.
- 11 Toulmin, S. 1972. Human Understanding: The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts. Princeton University Press, Princeton N.J.
- 12 Storer, N.W. The Hard Sciences and the Soft: Some Sociological Observations. Bulletin of the Medical Library Association, 55, 33–52.
- 13 Pirsig, Robert M. Pirsig, 1981. Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance – An Inquiry into Values, p. 179. Bantam New Age Book. First published by William Morrow and Company, Inc. 1974.
- 14 One exception, known to the author, is the science centre "Heureka" in Finland and there might be some others in the science and technology sector, but anything of the kind is hardly possible in other museums.
- 15 Šola, Tomislav. 1982. A contribution to a possible definition of Museology. A paper presented at ICOM/ICOFOM Symposium "The system of Museology and interdisciplinarity", Paris. The enthusiastic reaction came though from G. H. Rivière. The main objections throughout the years were basically two: linguistic clumsiness of the term and lack of any

pragmatic relevance to the museum profession (the English disagreed, the Germans never cared and the Americans saw no need for an applied science at all).

16 Ecomuseology, new museology, economuseology.

17 Ewald Hering, German physiologist and psychologist (1834–1918); a very inspirative and visionary author who wrote a book about a theory of memory, regarding memory as "general function of any organized matter". In modern technology of alloys increasing the "memory" of material is actually achieving the extraordinary elasticity of these materials. It would be, therefore, normal to use the analogy in its full capacity in the human field.

18 See page ... of this book for some further reflection upon values in museums.

19 See the text reprinted in this book "The prologue to the cybernetic museum"; "cybernetic museum" is part of my international lecturing from 1989, also mentioned in some of my published texts; this analysis merits further research beyond my amateurish try.

20 Carroll, Lewis, as quoted in the paper by Frans Schouten.

#### NOTES:

– In the 8th note should it be "...interpretation centres, heritage planning groups..." – with a comma between "centres" and "heritage"?

Are these future professionals from museums, from art galleries, from archives, from historic sites, from libraries, from interpretation centres, from heritage planning groups and from similar institutions?

– Remember the page number to the 18th note!

## 7. DEFINITIONS AND REVISIONS – TOWARDS THE TOTAL MUSEUM (1)

Museums remind me sometimes of cars: flourishing industry based upon gasoline run engines that, everybody knows, we must abandon in some near future; besides, the possible alternative is there but too much power is built upon this structure. The truth is, however, that museums are not that important as cars (at least not to the transnational capital, corporative business, governments etc.). We are allowed, as much as our chin financially stays out of water, to change and grow. You cannot call it a freedom as we are highly conditioned and highly manipulated. In fact, I do not know who we are as we hardly exist as a profession (see the state of our professional organization, see the differences of our philosophies and of our bosses, see our different traditions, see the obvious lack of clear internationalism, see the fact that 98 % of us are not trained for the job we do but for something else, and so on). Within the context of our profession there is some vague idea of commonness, some feeling that we have to do something together. After, say some dozen of professional meetings, you start to hate actively any professional or spiritual aspirations beyond the walls of your proper monastery. Indeed, we are some curious kind of Cartesian monks whereas people expect us to act as franciscan preachers. And, if you do allow this parallel, let me say that the appearing system of heritage care (one that is taking shape) differs from the old one like the protestant congregationalism from the traditional catholicism.

Museums should ripe into custom formed action, to human measure, by their size and their performance, respectively. It is like getting back, from roman clumsiness and lack of imagination to the greek subtlety and sincere intimacy. We are the first in the entire human history obliged or condemned to the constant process of change. There is practically no time to stop and reflect. As civilization, we have to possess powerful means of (a) consolidation of our identity and of (b) calculation of effects of our next step. Our past and our future are equally important. Past is wisdom and inspiration. The future is constant adaptation and understanding.

One thing is for sure. That is, we have to have a speculative layer of our profession which may have some quality of our professional "weltanschauung", some kind of common story upon which we build up our specializations. How far could or should that theory reach? A good question as we are not very sure what museums are either. Misunderstanding lies already in some historical perspective: we cannot agree upon the beginning of the phenomenon. Obviously the modern, traditional museum institution has come into existence only in the 18th and 19th century and it is still (in spite of the technological disguise) the prevailing pattern of it. "Third wave museums" (2) are appearing very slowly and that may suggest what the problem is with museum institution. It has got a sort of corrupted bureaucratic mind – it usually spends few times more money for its own mere functioning than for the programme. Something like first vehicles: engine and wheels only, but – happily enough – it is moving. But, mind you, the world is suffering the drama of constant and disasterous change. The big issue of today is tripled: identity – adaptation – fitness; the fight for survival as dramatic for natural species (not any more for five hundred animals that have disappeared etc.) as for all other identities, from cultural to institutional. Quite a few cultures have disappeared but the criminal is said to be unknown. I have even heard the intellectuals say when we talk about export of western cultural model to developing countries and of acculturation: Well, if they buy it by their own will, they are to be blamed for the disasterous effects themselves. – A logic of drug peddlers. Museums built up their potentials by the merit of scientists working in them but decisive and parallel to it was the greed of ownership and

conquest. (3) They have, therefore, largely failed to function as wells dug into identity, as transfers of past experience. Instead of treating the past as a source of vital inspiration that can help us to act intelligently today, they have become a part of that very same past, some extension of it, some projection of its own nature. These truths are well disguised by the form and technology of museums but stand indeed for the majority of institutions. Conformist as they are, museums remained subtle tools of the ruling power and bearers of prevailing patterns. They are now beloved for their (false) appearance of stability (in a shaken world), for their eternal values, for "relics" they contain, for their detachment of the banal world of ours, for their firmness to defend "the excellence" and "beauty". All that is not entirely a sin, as within some evolutive approach all ideas should find some satisfactory projection, but, again, it remains the question of measure and vitality. From the perspective of everyday curatorial worries one has necessarily great difficulties in seeing one self as a part of gigantic strive: whether museums on the whole are counterproductive or serve and create survival energies may indeed seem an invented problem. Only lately when the traditional museum institution itself has got in peril, theoreticians are invited to speak (but I do not think that they are really listened to). Besides, the intimidating notion of change should be given the proper meaning: the theory is not speaking about individual institutions but of institutional configuration and entire phenomenology; change will always happen as a process (if guided well) and, speaking globally, by admitting the new quality as a change by adding.

The practice has, so far, preceded the theory and overcome our traditionalist notion of museum institution. To control this process but let it happen will always be the measure of success for the entire profession. We have, therefore, a constant opportunity for analysis of present tendencies:

- New, custom cut museums (fourth generation of ecomuseums etc.);
- exhibition centres (changing, temporary museums);
- science centres (museums without original objects);
- "entertainment enterprises" (heritage based);
- "heritage industry" (Beamish, theme parks);
- museums of future (Epcot, Futuroscope);
- new, big national museums (National Museum of Australia);
- big synthesized museums (Museum of Civilizations, Ottawa);
- new heritage concerned organizations;
- tendency of convergence of cultural and commercial;
- cultural investment to encourage development and economic growth;
- tendency to conceptualization;
- cultural marketing that leads to individualization of institutions and respective image making;
- tendency to integrative processes of institutional sector;
- growth of the complementary sector (museum centres, documentation centres, orientation centres, services, traveling exhibition centres etc.);
- tendency towards integrated preservation;
- tendency towards informatic integration;
- tendency towards total interpretation and communication;
- tendency towards the planned and studied usage of technology;
- tendency towards the multidisciplinary, creative use of museums (curator being just a basis of it).

There is, finally, a strong tendency of radicalism that forces change unconditionally, which

may lead to automatism and some kind of trendy professional behaviour. My claim is that quite a few museums should only adjust but not change as they reached the point of value "per se". Besides, purification of ideas, of concepts and of styles is a rather recent and unhappy invention of our civilization. The life itself and our users (when they are not totally conditioned) should have also a right to express their own judgement. (It is the task of an efficient transdisciplinary, possibly museological, research.) It would be quite improbable, though if not inconceivable, that new museums should look like old ones.

### Organizing museums or integrating interests

Immediately after the holocaust of the first world war there were initiatives aimed at securing the mankind from similar catastrophies. Within the League of Nations there was created The Committee of Intellectual Co-operation. Present world's organization of museums, ICOM, originated from these ideas of preserving peace and security in the world, of providing the undisturbed and flourishing continuation of identities. After having turned another black page in our history, we concentrated upon specialist perspective of the role of museum institution in the modern society. ICOM was founded in 1946 as museum concerned and devoted to the profession that enjoyed an incredible blooming in the fifties and the sixties.

There are two tendencies within the world museum organization that call for reconsideration of its basic functioning: One is slight but constant decrease in membership over last few years, and the other is high fluctuation of its members. All that happens in the situation of world's museum boom that shows no signs of fatigue for some deceny already. It is more than a paradox. On one side it is clearly visible that the motivation of museum people (and their institutions) to consolidate on the widest professional and geographical level is in constant increase, and yet, that they see no fulfilment of their expectations – once members of ICOM they leave it. Some years ago when the red light started to blink the soothing result was the positive difference between the number of newcomers and that of "disillusioned" (if it doesn't sound too cynical). ICOM is able to motivate, to hold together probably some two to five percent of total number of professionals and institutions all over the world. As the number of latter is increasing the ICOM's difficulties may suggest some defect of the entire conception.

Why is it that the world's museum organization appears to be relatively unattractive to museums and their institutions? What does it give? – "ICOM News" (which is mainly concerned with the organization itself), documentation centre (which is out of reach to the great majority of present and possible members), the structure of international committees (as the organizational frame for all specialists' communication and gatherings), a possibility for some 20 % of membership of meeting together at the General Conference every third year (if they can afford it), relevant documentation and information upon request, and that is that – - basically speaking. What would presumable and present members like to have? Hoping that it is not a pure guess I would say following (besides what it already does): much stronger professional and international image, digested information upon the entire scope of writings and happenings world wide, lending a-v information (upon institutions, fields, education of museum professionals), assigning experts when and where needed, manuals and publications that help in orientation in novelties in everyday problems, theory etc., a central distribution possibility of all publications concerning museum professional fields, wider conception and renewed statuts able to comprise all the growing differencies within the field of heritage care, prestigious meaning for all the included

professionals, signs of adherence and recognition, scholarship fund, professional awards and so on. Would you consider it impossible? Between the endangered ICOM and the impossible projects for renewal of it I choose the latter as it may bring us nearer to some new quality.

How, otherwise, could we respond to the changing world of museums? I am afraid that we might end up with the professional organization whose total importance will derive from Unesco – as a feeble echo of it. The other part of the development is growing alternative. There are already organizations and initiatives that will try to fulfil the supposed needs of heritage centered professions. What if they get one day the Unesco's blessing? Other problem is regionalization. If, in some years, there would be established a European museum association or, better, european heritage association, ICOM may turn still more to its symbolic values.

Nevertheless, new tendencies and developments will clearly suggest some new organizational configuration. Like in museums we are facing development of synthetical organizations and institutions, those that will be able to offer new, wide common denominators to the variety of new accomplishments. Traditional museums in their taxonomical division of labor and seemingly harmoniously divided world of theirs will have to comply with aggressive new bastard forms and the synoptic logic they bring up. Besides, their field of application and their sources alike are of the very same origine, only their methods may differ.

As it becomes more and more obvious that our main task is the transfer of collective experience using specific methods, new associations of interest will be very much transdisciplinary and will not care much about dilemmas of traditional museology. These new organizations, whether formed on international, national or regional level, will be encouraged in their appearing by the integrational logic of informatics. They will be more than anything else pools of interested parties united upon the need for creating some strategy upon rationalization and coordinated policy. If you find museums, media centres, data-banks or even specialized theatres or TV stations together with communication agencies in the very same organization concerned with the care for heritage, do not be surprised as they will be united with firm reasons. (4) New creative medium will need everything that goes with it.

This development will be based upon the total shift of gravity centre of present configuration of heritage care from acquisition to communication, from object to concept and information, from past for the sake of it to the present using the past, from past orientation to future orientation, from passive cronologist to active participat in development, from knowledge source to experience transfer, from facts to sensibility, to awareness – to wisdom.

Practice represents such an enormous source of inspiration and is equally precious analytic potential. The practice of today has a new quality of, so to say, being in front of its own self. We are living in zero years when our future is reluctantly taking some shape. The simultaneous history is new feeling and leaves us no time to project or foresee the future. It is post-industrial, post-modern post-historical era, information society different from anything the 19th century scientist and philosophers could guess. Could you believe that Jules Verne lacked daring imagination? His "television" was supposed to happen in the 29th century. And yet, practice has not considerably changed in the museums since the turn of the century. Museums still keep alive that traditional image, in spite of "reformists". Remarkable "achievement" if one considers the fact that the world of ours has become synonymous to change. It would not take long to prove that it happened because museums became sort of shelters, temples of good old times, devoted to the cults of brave civilization and holy

nostalgia. If you wrap this reluctance to contemporary drama and *The Age of Great Anxiety* (5) into scientific alibi, you have quite a steady bastion, something like the last donjon before the future gives up. But the society has a vision of its own self. Do we have it in or for our museums? Well, practice is there, born by the needs and responding to them, but "the future of any institution is dependent upon its ability to grow and change". (6)

It requires what naturalists call "fitness", an ability to survive by adaptation. We are projecting our entire environment and we may soon be forced to produce the necessary oxygen for our atmosphere. Nothing is left in balance and without our intervention. As it seems to be the destiny we can neither wait for ten collectors happen in some coherent happy succession so that, as the result of their effort we could have another museum collection. It may have been charming and certainly is romantic, very human in any case, but that process was quite casual and exposed to all the risks. We cannot afford any more to wait that life shapes itself nor we have time enough to expose ourselves to the influence of the environment in its social, political, economical and cultural dimension so as to be shaped accordingly. That very same environment is not spontaneous and organic in its own nature for quite a while already.

Due to these circumstances and lack of our professional conceptualization, we are not sure any more what the museum institution is. The boundaries among institutions and towards different forms of action are dimmed, blurred, unsteady. There is an evident, quite dramatic convergence of culture, leisure, business, education...Nature is turned into museums, libraries mount exhibitions, department stores are opening museums, entertainment business has entered into the museum field and museums behave like entertainers. Things happen fast: fourth generation of Disneyland is very much some creative communication and the fourth generation of ecomuseums is approaching the same goal from the other side...But, at the same time, a part of the institutions is longing for the good old days so that the future looks more like a danger than challenge. Some synoptic, holistic logic that sees the new god in total heritage may imply the existence of total museums, and they get puzzled. They rightly feel that the necessary change should be, if not sudden, than surely profound. Uninhibited mind may easily be shocked by learning that the entire system of heritage care today is founded upon a severe division of competences and different legislations - the basis of it being "movable" or "imovable" character of potential objects. As museums and all kindred institutions in charge of heritage are about same reality their presentation resemble very much reading a book from two separate volumes: one with verbs only and the other with nouns.

If we discuss today the society of the total information (7), the need and a possibility of a perfect recall, the global village, blip culture, telematics etc., we can hardly allow ourselves a collective memory that would be haphazard by its formation and disintegrated by its practice. We lack mechanisms of complete retrieval, of synchronization, of division of competences, mechanism of effective synthesis and, finally, means of orientation (within the field and of the field itself). Left to the perils of arbitrary judgement and disorderly treatment, to the institutional lack of enthusiasm, to the bureaucratism, monetarisation and formalism, heritage is like puzzle with parts that nobody ever made to fit.

New professional sensibility sees arguments for regarding many things as museums and we allow, in fact, that museums can contain only sounds, or that a given natural environment is transformed into a museum by merely "framing" it and adding some necessary services for the public. Museums can very much be "living" and "temporary" and not necessarily a

definable institution easily turned into a standardized form. This, I am sure, could enrage anybody who is dealing with legislative side of the matter. But practice decides as in the case of science centres that have been disapproved for some twenty years, ever since the creation of Exploratorium in San Francisco: La Villette and all others are admitted by ICOM's definition and are allowed to become members of it. Needless to say, they do not contain museum objects at all.

Any definition that improves conceptualization of the entire profession that is productive and not restrictive is plausible. Besides, a definition should be able to have an open structure, able to admit novelties and – endure. Like a good law, it should leave a lot of freedom and inspire further development of the practice. People of vision in our profession have usually been more ready to talk about museum institution than to define it. When trying to do the latter, they would write almost a poetry of some museum-tuned kind. The definition given by G.H.Rivière in 1973 is a good example of that: true and beautiful but page long. As some heresy, ment only to push things in proper direction, might do us good. I would propose that we define museum as any creative effort of cybernetical action on the basis of complex experience of heritage. Therefore, taking up a question related science centres and kindred institutions, whether they are really museums or something else, the answer to the dilemma will always depend upon who is given the right to offer it. "Puritans" will decline their right to belong to the old respectable family. Personally I see that the God is the same everywhere – the lithurgical differencies appear to me only charmingly interesting. One has to bear in mind, however, that the critical mass and the critical quantity of novelties and new experiences once reached, will change the gravity centre of the entire field and the heresy will become official. Science centres, like many other contemporary forms of action (even lacking as important core as collections of their own), are creating awareness, are sensibilizing public and are causing, by the consequences, a changed behaviour. Their resource is also the collective experience, their basis is science and their method is communication. The foreseeable development of the field will bring convergence of all institutions on a double natured, conceptual level: they will act as the theatre of facts (due to the scientific experience they contain) and the theatre of fiction (due to their inherent, creative, spiritual and communicational experience).

Ill success is the inbuilt risk of any prophecy but I would say that science centres (if we keep that illustrative example) are not heretical enough when compared with known practice and that they will face the necessity of radicalisation of their concept. They will discover that fiction and creative interpretation could, if used properly, multiply their effects so that they become attractive even to the traditional public of art museums. As change should not become still another intolerant religion, traditional museums of technology (if good enough) may improve their practices, say, by introducing art historians and sociologists in their working process. New science centres, on the other hand, once they become more brave, will become centres where we shall learn future, something like decompression chambers for us emerging from the depths of manipulated historical experience. Due to the cybernetical, counter-active nature of new institutions, they should act as catalysts of development at least by ensuring well informed criticism and corrective influences. They will become museums of the future in a certain sense like EPCOT but with less glamour and more arguments for their message. In these centres, not only in them, though, we shall learn the art of adaptation through understanding of environment and our place in it, but there we shall have also virtual models of the future of our past as a tool for decision making. Knowledge in its scientific forms will always give structure and the basis to the museum communication (or should one say: heritage communication?); but, new integrated forms of the total museum of the future will

have to be able to speak metaphoric, symbolic and mythical language, the one that would be creating images in the spirit on an irrational and surrealist level – creating thus new sensibility, direct receptiveness and creative interests. It complies well with the beautiful inversion proposed by Marcel Evrard: "But knowing is nothing: we only know what we know, and that is always what we do not need any more".

## Museology and beyond it

Speculation is wellcome if it serves the practice. It is indispensable if it helps the future happen.

Most of the professionals are frustrated by the number of new sciences and scientific disciplines that emerge constantly. Some of them mark our predestination to plunge further and deeper into the matters, and, further one goes the narrower and more defined the field gets. There is a wrong part of it if I am allowed to claim, that applies to some useless and unnecessary scientism, some kind of scientific hyperrealism, some state of hypersensitivity – a state usually detached from any recognizable motivation. That is a centripetal movement and a sort of scientific implosion. But there are proposals for theoretical treatment of new phenomena, new development, for potentials that should apply to set of new themes, say within technological and communicational area. That development of synthetical sciences or disciplines responds directly to the dramatically imposed new needs of our civilization. This movement is very much enterprising, expansive and transdisciplinary. There is no reason why we should not find both tendencies in such a flourishing field as museums, or heritage care in general. Those working there would do themselves good by remembering the password to the future: synthesis.

Not that some new sciences are really denied. Informatics, for instance, is very much accepted as it can be easily linked to the victorious new technology. But museology – let us be serious! (Just try to say, like I have to, "I have done my PhD in museology and now I teach museology at the University", and you see serious people frowning or compassionately smiling. And, indeed, one is happy if they catch "musicology" instead; then they just think you're not good enough to play an instrument appropriately.) But, why would museums need a theory?

Museum is not an old institution if regarded in the context of historical time. Our civilization represents only the last six thousand years of man's existence on this Planet. So, the tradition of modern museum institution dating back some two hundred odd years should not oblige us infinitely. Due to the very curious atavism the majority of museums confined themselves to the problems and even the odour of the past and passed, allowing even the so called historical distance to make sure that the past is ripe enough to be theirs. They act like pharaoh's servants skilled in embalming and absorbed by religious mysticism. So, as we are now aware, museums not only treated past but also generated it and belonged to it.

The fact that museums "grow like mushrooms" does not necessarily mean that there is no crisis of the institution. It demonstrates more, to my opinion, the desperate need of the world for effective identity protection. As this institutional response is not exactly what the world needs, we have full right to speak about the crisis of concept. Idolatrous attachment to past and the wishfull bias of traditional museum public (that took them as refuge from dramatic present and uncertain future), caused serious lagging of the entire museum institutional sector behind other public institutions. My claim is that we are facing the time of some decisive,

"final" development of heritage concerned institutions that requires complete openness of definitions in which traditional museums will only be part of the rich configuration of varieties. If compared to the history of western christianism, museums are still in the midst of the 14th century: few popes, divided followers, schisms, and rather weak Rome (i.e. Paris). Museums are still temples of our human endeavour, churches of our civilizational conquest that do not accept the subtleties of our contemporary dilemmas and that is exactly the reason for the appearance of reformist movement.

If museography (proposed by Casper F. Neickel two and a half centuries ago) is a canon law of our profession, some set of liturgical rules for museums – where is our theology? Namely, "churchology" would be inappropriate for priesthood as much as "museology" is for museum people. Even in the most practical, pragmatical approach we have a quantity of questions, answers and ideas that we cannot press into the limited scope of museography. There is an obvious need for a theoretical body based upon the deontology of museums and related institutions that will represent common philosophy of a modern, dynamic profession.

The fact that museology has suffered its century of solitariness of evident ill success, may speak for itself: something substantial in it is wrong. But it is so very much against that traditional mental configuration in our profession that we need a real *metanoia*, a completely changed way of professional reasoning. As we managed to forget Neickel's term, placing everything unto the title of museology, we created a lot of misunderstanding and closed the door before seeing what was still behind it. Museology is not a science of museums as clearly as Moby Dick is not a manual on whaling. (8) For all those that are doing the same job we have to propose the same basic philosophy as they serve the same god of collective experience. And they will find it a missing middle stone to make a solid arch. In the spiral logic of history we have to experience the feeling of having been to the place already. We lack the institution (or the institutional configuration) that may act as a council of elders in our global village. What we are talking now about is plainly and simply – a WISDOM. It is not knowledge, and it is not facts, and it is not expert information – it is sublimed synthesis of many different experiences over grandiose span of time and space. And, indeed, aren't we grand for that, the entire wisdom of the world is with us and still within our reach! That introspective of our profession has to lay down new mental coordinates, it has to promise order and perspectives where we experienced only frustration.

So, the science "X", that seven years ago I provocatively proposed to be given the name of heritology (9), must indeed be some kind of a science of the totality of heritage, some philosophy of collective memory, of collective experience; it must be some pansophy or, what I recently like more – mnemosophy. As this could dismay any honourable scientist or a respectable curator, I will reveal that it is the contents that I am after. Once redefined this science may easily retain its misleading name of museology, One of the main tasks of it would be to study the nature of our mission, the future of our institutions, and all the whys and hows of heritage care. When about definitions, we are obviously speaking about some heritage cybernetics: a science "X" may be defined as cybernetic philosophy of heritage, some science that defines the future of the past.

We shall soon require obligatory training for the future professionals, thus breaking a very curious anachronism: we are the only public service where you learn the trade by mere practicing, something like eskimo hunters but with less time and less concern of the elders. Most of museum curators fervently insist upon museums having special strategical significance for any community and our civilization as a whole. They also prove that museum

is very specific working process, with its own rules and its own technology. But, they refuse to admit any need of some scientific discipline serving these particularities. On the other hand, we have to assure that there is a study and effective transfer of professional experience and that the entire profession is, firstly, defined and, secondly, strengthened by the common philosophy. Otherwise we shall be condemned to learn the trade by "sitting next to Sally" method. (10) We may end up by having the museography taught within the department of information sciences along with archivistics, librarianship, informatics etc. (11) Science "X" may represent the common denominator or the basis for each of these specializations. It should be inconceivable to study any of these without being trained in some basic academic discipline. By such an undergraduate study we shall be able to get a new breed of professionals that will know their job and who will be able to spend their creative years in advancing the profession. With wide approach that they would obtain, they would not suffer from institutional chauvinism and possessive mania. The final goal of their training will be the applied art of heritage communication and the experts among them – able to rethink the concepts and respond creatively to changing circumstances and global questions – will be a mixture of scientists, teachers and artists.

So, finally, what does future announce to us? Museological crystal ball suggests this:

- Museums to the measure of their proper environment;
- identity centres;
- heritage orientation centres;
- regional, national and international museum/heritage information networks;
- regional and national heritage media centres;
- territorial (and/or national) storages of heritage objects;
- heritage data banks;
- heritage action "in situ" – living traditions;
- inclusion and treatment of heritage objects and data that are kept outside of the institutionalized care.

If these presumptions are rightly guessed, they will mean and require:

- constant strive towards (para-)artistic communication
- claim of museums and related institutions for a free status (much like that of universities)
- obligatory training of future staff (undergraduate and complementary)
- creation of the new professional field of heritage engineering.

By relying upon the principles of quantity and force we shall be always facing the wall. This is the way we do it in our civilization and in our museums that serve it so well. It is like a Lewis Carroll's paradox of the map. (12) The grand idea, very much like that of present museums, was to make a map of the country on the scale a mile to mile. If ethical issues may be hard to grasp, how come that the mere physical implications are ignored? The Second Wave civilization is dying but its faithful second wave attendance is still there keeping the master's spirit alive.

As for the future, it should be obvious that only art, even in museums, can reach the unattainable, can suggest and express complex truths by sublime interpretation. (13) Therefore, the reality is not the working method of museums and it cannot be their prevailing

means of expression: its creative interpretation based upon scientific research can help us to feel the meanings, the essence, the logic... So, the ultimate form of museum mission is not world museum but – world. The ideal, unattainable day when "religio curatoris" gets from marble temples to the minds of people, the wisdom will triumph. But the museums and their curators, as we know them, will not be there. Their absence will only mean that their mission is accomplished. (14)

Zagreb, March 1989

#### Notes

1. Šola, Tomislav. 1985. Towards the total museum. PhD, University of Ljubljana. A synthesis of some ideas has been used in this paper.
2. After Alvin Toffler; ideas further developed in author's contribution: Towards the contemporary conception of museology. *Informatologia Yugoslavica*, No 15, 1983. Zagreb.
3. Šola, Tomislav. 1988. Museums and developing countries. Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 1st December 1988. (Printed in India in 1989.)
4. "Discovery" – Traces of Europe's Cultural Integration, an Application Pilot Project within the framework of the European Museum Network. ("Its main contents are virtual or imaginary collections of artifacts...")
5. Toffler, Alvin.
6. Foul, Roberta, editor-in-chief, *Museum News*.
7. Bureau, Jacques. 1969. *L'ère logique*. Ed. Robert Laffont. Paris.
8. Šola, Tomislav. 1988. What is Museology? Introductory lecture at the international seminar "What is Museology" 12.–14. April 1988, Umeå University, Sweden.
9. Šola, Tomislav. 1982. A Contribution to a possible definition of Museology. A paper presented at ICOFOM symposium "Interdisciplinarity in Museology", August 1982, Paris.
10. Boylan, Patrick. 1985. Contribution at the ICTOP international symposium "Do not forget the museum object", 2.–8. September 1985, Dubrovnik.
11. That is the strategy of the newly opened Chair of Information Sciences, University of Zagreb, very much carried out by Prof. Dr. Ivo Maroevic.
12. Schouten, Frans. 1987. The Paradox of the Map. A paper presented at CECA international symposium, 6.–12. July 1987, La Villette, Paris.
13. Concept and Nature of Museology. *Museum*, No 153, 1987. Paris.
14. A part of this paper has been presented within the introductory lecture at the Danish Association of Cultural History Museums' Conference, 15.–17. March 1989.

## 8. CAN THEORY HELP AND BE PRO-ACTIVE ?

The shortest way to deal with this question would be by saying: Yes, it can. Further on, we may wish to know which theory can help in what way and to whom, under what conditions it could make way and push forward. What we have to deal with is museology. It is not an entirely agreeable task as we deal with the matter that dwells upon variety of controversies, denied only by those occupying the extreme positions: it does or it does not exist. It does exist because we have it mentioned, discussed and wrote about since the 17th century, because it is being taught at more than 800 places all around the world, because it exists in legislation and professional jargon etc. It does not exist, on the other hand, because serious protagonists say it is still in *status nascendi*, yet to be born; the pragmatists among scientists and managers alike refuse even considering it seriously. So, is there a way to solve the dilemma? We need answers urgently as it might easily be true that after some two hundred years of evident history of museum institution we can neither speak of museums as unquestionable public service nor we can claim that there is a respective profession behind this sector.

### Critics of traditional museology

Traditional museology is museum centred. Since there is no other example of a science about an institution, it would be highly doubtful that this one could exist. It demonstrates clearly the inability to deal with the new practices in heritage care and communication. This is why at its very beginning it split into "special museologies", trying to function as a divided whole – very much responding to the very situation of the museums. With the appearance of the new, holistic approaches to the heritage care and with the insistence upon communication, museology responded by multiplication of concepts instead of integration and openness.

We do hear some clear voices here and there, but the prevailing state of today's museology is still rather chaotic. Anybody inclined to take museology seriously will stumble over the multitude of proposals: new museology, ecomuseology, economuseology, museum studies etc. Whereas museography clearly stands for the methods and techniques of museum working process, the same process is still assigned to museology; some speak about museologists meaning museum people, while others talk about them as museographers. Others, still, explain that curator of a museum is not necessarily a museologist (or: museumologist). Some differences are conceptual, some obviously terminological: is museology interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary discipline makes a good question but the most using the two terms are having in mind only its eclectic nature.

Traditional museology has become a sort of placebo discipline, an armchair science, and what has been done usually has lacked the witty charm of contemporary scientific discourse. But, as H. Hesse says, it is known that nobody writes worse than the defenders of the old ideologies. Besides, to mention just one inaptitude – according to common sense and the testimonies of our African colleagues – the concept of museology is totally useless in Africa. The problem is, and let me signal it here, that European museography is useless there because, put it this way or that, what is being taught as museology is not much more than a pretentious museography: methods, techniques and history – be it collection care, education, marketing, management or exhibitions.

The system of present museology is divergent and inconsistent. It is not yet in productive

shape i.e. it can only service itself, but stays there and is not ultimately questioned because it needs a complete redefinition: it cannot receive any corrections as it is not an opened system. Had it been differently, museology would not be for some hundred years in what was afterwards called *status nascendi*: An unhappy defect, as it produced a sort of *misology*, a pragmatic opposition to solving some problems of profession by reflection and intellectual effort. The quantitative boom of museums produced the self-satisfaction of the profession which, in its turn, made all the questions of theory second rate. What was only a societal reaction to the drama of endangered identities, museum people understood as a triumph of pragmatism. The pragmatism, so triumphant and so shortsighted, is, as B. Russell says, like a warm bath getting warmer and warmer so imperceptibly that one never knows exactly when to scream.

Why should we get concerned?

It is this hot bath of today's museum situation that makes the discussion about museology meaningful: we have to scream finally, if it is not too late. Squeezed between reluctant state administration and reckless corporate business on one side and heritage industry and entertainment on the other, museums would thus signal two things: that we finally want a science helping to make us a true profession and that we need a body of sublimated multidisciplinary experience able to define our entire professional mind. Museums face the stagnation whereas heritage in its totality becomes more and more an integral part of everyday culture. It may be, indeed, all the same who will do the job, but we claim the right, don't we? But we do not have a coherent and convincing way to express ourselves, first of all to achieve understanding among ourselves and, secondly, to be clear to our partners and clients. Besides, a true profession knows organizational coherence which is above the specific differences of its parts. Moreover, it transcends not only particular interests of an individual institution but also of the individual experts, prolonging their interests in terms of both, space and time: it is not only those circumstances of yours, *hic et nunc*, that will guide your interests. The museology in that sense, as well as in the sense of a science with its proper place in the scientific community, does not exist. But we do have some professional basis.

Do we have a theory?

It seems that we do. Museography is a constantly developing theoretical body which contains abstracted, abbreviated and normed professional experience concerning the methods and techniques of our job. We now have numerous manuals which clearly, and I would say rightly, claim to be usable or even good guides to a successful museum practice. They represent a mixture of skills and procedures which guide any professional throughout the museum working process. Those authors, being convinced – maybe even talented – practitioners, have a pragmatic barrier that prevents them, at any moment, to mention even a notion of a possible science behind the job they describe so well. They instruct the diligent feeders of the machine but where the machine is heading and which directions all the machines go, with what foreseeable effects on themselves and the mission they have to accomplish – that is outside their scope of interest (even the reach, maybe), and therefore inexistant (so a very human behaviour). Of course, most museum people like this rationalist utopia where things seem clear and solid, where all questions are answered (even though only the answerable ones are posed, which is almost a matter of cartesian upbringing) and where perspectives are mathematically regular and endless.

Should we have a science of our own?

Taken formally it is an academic question, but the answer is already contained in the questions posed – if they are posed – but whichever way taken, they will irresistibly sound like: Who we are? What do we want? Where do we go? We are institutions paid (tacitly) by the community administration, doing exactly what has to be done in museums (see the manual!), and this also answers the other two questions. Great practitioners (J. C. Dana, Alma Wittlin, G. Morley, W. Sandberg, G. H. Rivière, D. S. Ripley, to mention just a few), posed those simple questions more than often, offering bright and visionary reflections together with innovative practices.

The science we talk about, implicitly, can even be called museology if we agree so, but the name, like in any good marketing, should not be misleading: we now talk not only about museums but about many other institutions most of which, indeed, qualify for the membership in ICOM if they wish so (additional articles of the statutes enable it), but not many do. Science centres, heritage centres, theme parks, cultural centres, art centres, variety of private and company museums, natural reserves, natural parks, orientation centres, interpretation centres, permanent exhibitions, visitor centres, archeological sites, etc. are this growing heritage species, which might need some common explanation.

Knowing ourselves

It is not an easy effort any more to define one's own self, and yet this sort of analysis, that we lack all the conceptual and methodological accessories for, is exactly the introspection we have to do. Know yourself! What more basic a request one can propose? Out of this introspective ability stems every possible quality afterwards. The fact is that most people working in museums do not truly know the museum medium. They do not understand the museum concept; they recognize museums only where they see the recognizable technology. Can museum exist, in its elements at least, outside of institutions – in the streets, in the heads, in other cultural forms? Is museum necessary everywhere and in all cultures? What are the extents and limits of museum expression? It is absolutely unthinkable that a theater could be successful when directed by somebody who does not understand the specificity of theater medium. What makes a true virtuoso is the profound understanding of the instrument.

How far do we reach?

We cannot afford any more to think only in terms of physical institution but in terms of concepts. But this is yet unexplored land and no wonder we fear the unknown: with data and information banks (including even museum storages in their network), with telematics and virtual museum of hypermedia, with all that we must seriously consider how close our relations are with other institutional sectors that have the same generative concept of heritage as their basis: archives and libraries, to mention only the closest. Aren't we branches of a same tree? We all deal with the selected collective memory having possibilities to form our messages the way that immediately comprises responsibility (what message; for whom; in whose name?). Twelve years ago when the term "heritology" was provocatively proposed (Šola, 1982), it was there only to show the direction where we should be trying to find our

science. What can be seen as based upon similar principle forms the common area of resonances, of unifying factors, deserves definition of that principle: most likely we are talking about the some strive to assure the continuity of the heritage, be it natural, civilizational or cultural; we are talking about survival of identities endangered by the change and accumulation of new experiences; we are talking about preservation of information (in form of objects and/or recorded), of upkeep of messages and their creation.

### Understanding the mission

We need a science to be able to define and constantly redefine our mission. It is a multidisciplinary approach applied to the specific field of heritage, which should enable us to make clear mind upon whom do we serve – who are our true bosses. There is no permanent definition of the role of museums as it has changed ever since the creation of museums so the question is only how well we would like to adjust it to the present and possible users. All the mentioned areas of institutional heritage care make selection and thus create the bodies of collective memory. They create memory (although they claim that it is science that decides for them) because every act of choice is necessarily subjective and potentially also creative act. It is expertise, vocation, talent and responsibility that make the creation. And, the sooner one knows this obligation the better chances there are for a creation to take place.

What is creation in museums and institutions alike? – Successful, meaningful, productive, spiritual impact upon the mind of the visitor that leads to a changed behaviour on the higher conceptual level. An impact that is created through repeated emissions corrected by the received reaction i.e. through communicational process can produce a surplus value that I would like to identify as wisdom. A science of heritage deals with the quality of memory but not just any memory as it might appear with today's perfectionism leading to a future of perfect recall – what a nightmare! We talk about ennobling and enriching the raw material of memory so that it becomes a wisdom. This *mnemosophy* (Šola, 1985) could make sense by the wideness of its application, openness of its possible system and qualitative ambition it contains by definition.

If museum institution is a means of good, the source of wisdom amalgamated and sedimented in the past, then it might be perceived as a mechanism of liberation and emancipation. (There are many museums that the soul and torture the mind into the moulds of concepts and myths of suspect quality.) Mnemosophy could also help us to create museums where we would not assure only the transfer of socially and scientifically formed knowledge (i.e. education), as knowledge alone, disregarding the quantity, serves little purpose. If museums cannot appropriate the sort of impact produced by great music, namely that feeling of fulfillment and closeness to the essence, and if they cannot enhance self knowing through contemplation and the chatarsis of understanding, then they might easily find themselves out of business, to put it rudely.

### Organization of the service

In most countries of the world museums are badly organized as a sector. Most of them function as separate strongholds of some vaguely common cause: the spirit of private collectors still dwelling in their collections invaded their minds. The frontiers between them are drawn by scientific classification, by fiscal status, by rank, by size and ambition, by

administration – and by individualism. Besides, what they expose are parts of an imaginary puzzle never meant to be put together. In this world of synthesis museums are still not prepared to go far from their analysis, not to mention any further ambition like contributing to the sustained development of society. Without the professional philosophy, without unity through the same mission – assured by professional discipline and vocational fidelity to a common cause – there is little hope museums could remain a developing profession. Some mnemosophy or call-it-what-you-like science could give the convincing frame to this professional cross reference, introducing the notion of museums as common, unified source and building the network towards systems of libraries, archives and towards all the rising variety of other heritage oriented institutions and organizations.

### Building a profession

Finally!, one would almost exclaim. Just like disordered ranks are not an army, the dismembered and divided institutional clusters are not a profession. So, little can be done on a larger scale or in a conceptual shift, when we still have the majority of people working in museums without any formal training that would enable them to understand the medium and the mission in its full potential. The talent and quality experience are both rare so the profession is constituted upon the fact of specific institution they all work in. I am convinced that two hundred years of history and some half a century of true effort to build a profession were not entirely sufficient: there are weak zones in what should be a compact professional system: legal regulations (regulating the status in the society), licensing system (as our job is performed by all and everybody), code of ethics (usually of "conduct", hardly concerning mind and attitudes), autonomy (museums are autonomous only when acting according the rules of "establishment") and mission (which is mostly defined at the lowest, technical level).

Insisting upon professionalism is not building a position of a guild but caring that museums and kindred institutions become a solid, reliable partner to the state, to the media, to the informatic and telecommunication business and to the corporate business itself. If we consent to the present role and impact of museums, we might be relatively happy, at least in the cultural centres, with the place assigned to museums. But if we see museums as active, creative addition in the society where they use their enormous potential of stored knowledge in pursuing humanist and democratic ideals – forced sometimes into disagreement with the actual interests of governing force – then they might profit for the common benefits if they present a strong, united profession (when saying united, I even mean decentralized!).

Museums cannot ignore the globalization of problems of modern civilization. If they wish to participate in solutions (and I believe they should), they have to think globally, wherever their acting would be performed. As a strong profession (this mnemosophy is state of mind) they can see that true multidisciplinary means ability to move into the interspace, where the firm ground is not own institution but the common principle and mission. Thinking along these lines one easily comes to solutions which practice will certainly find, but one wonders will that happen in (proper) time, or at least in proper way: preliminary reflection enables practice to locate the solutions effectively. I therefore believe that we could (and should, indeed) have theoretical writings about the future of our profession(s) with the sole ambition to clear the mind and comprehend our present selves. (The first book on the theme was recently published by Routledge.) A profession without its speculative theory is like a vehicle without headlights: usable and secure when weather conditions are ideal. So, even the ideas I have proposed will, it seems to me, depend upon how you estimate the state of museums, of

heritage or, maybe, even of this world of ours.

## **V CONCLUSION**

1. Beyond the sharing of knowledge
2. Seven questions that most often perplex my students  
(And my Attempt to Help Them with Short Answers)

## 1. Beyond the Sharing of Knowledge

An introduction to quality in museums

Amidst of changes that make virtual museum reality and the imaginary museum a real possibility, museum people still discuss whether and how should they share the knowledge they possess. "Sharing" seems to be the ultimate proof of willingness to turn to their users. Yet, why does it seem like rearranging the chairs on the Titanic's deck? Indeed, why should anybody in the dancing hall be alarmed when the champagne is good and two gentlemen in the corner vie for the attention of a hesitant lady? From the perspective of a desk and the calm of our museum galleries, the drama of the changing paradigm sounds like a quarrel in a neighbour's courtyard. Since it always seemed that museologists should be scouts of our dismembered army or the watch on our ship sailing the treacherous seas, I assume the right of cautioning the profession of the circumstances that may endanger its successful existence.

The fact is that the museum profession shows unprecedented quantitative growth. In the last twenty years, however, museums were deaf to the needs they were supposed to fulfil but were still supported, as users are incapable of expressing their needs. But, business can do it in their name and push them towards commodity values. The insecurity the most people feel today easily fosters nostalgia. This is why we are witnessing the birth of a new dream industry, the industry of heritage, disguised in the form of museums and a range of new leisure facilities. Had it been for the quality approach, whose basis is always the clear understanding of the world around, museums would not be defeated on their own ground. The last *donjon* of the besieged fortress should not be science, however, but spread among the people around to build a new form of power. If this is not done the museums will be transformed into mere resources of the knowledge industry and a road-bed layer of the information super highway.

All experiences, both in practice as well as in theory, clearly demonstrate that we have to fulfil at least three priorities if we want to reach true questions and true levels when discussing our profession: 1. understanding the essence of the heritage concept; 2. understanding the world around and our community in it; 3. understanding the medium we use. Without it we shall unconsciously imitate academic discussions and eventually become obsolete and useless.

Since we have never seen a museum profession finalize its *status nascendi*, let alone achieve the importance of a mega profession of heritage communicators, only a few among us are aware that we find ourselves at a multiple crossroads with directions we hardly recognize the meaning of:

1. The first direction (INTELLECTUS) continues the original one and will always be the easiest to choose. The perspective it gives is the perfection of scientific facts, perfection in specialization, constant growth in size and numbers and satisfaction by the existence of the (*own*) *public* that highly estimates the knowledge and expertise concentrated in museums.

2. The second direction (EUPHORIA), which goes down the slope to what looks like a beautiful valley (therefore as easy to choose as the former one), leads to leisure business and well paid entertainment (if one can beat the rising competition).

3. The third direction (SAPIENTIA) is not a road maintained and made solid by organized legions of travellers, but a mounting path used by a few. It leads to a hybrid institution composed of many and even divergent interests, it serves as a place of exchange and getting

together, where teaching and learning, besides happening simultaneously, merge into understanding. Those who walk that path may shyly admit that their simple goal is to make the world better.

I have no doubt that either theory or pragma will eventually turn our profession(s) into the third direction, hopefully still in time to score what they are meant for. The quality of that solution is superior to the other two as it contains them as well. As for poetry *delectari et prodesse*, to entertain and be useful, our profession will see how it can serve the real people in their real time, and fulfill their real needs. There is nothing forbidden to us, but we are not likely to lead in research nor to project the future as our domain is the past. Relying upon St. Augustin's idea about what the past is and knowing that today's analytical mechanisms are drawing the past within hand's reach, we must share the drama of the present. Sharing the drama means participation, whereas participation means calculated influence. So what should or can be our contribution that others could share? Knowledge? Why us when most of other social institutions do it, most of them better than we can; some of them are even specialized producers of knowledge or highly specialized distributors of it. If it is not knowledge that heritage institutions primarily share with their users, it must then be values, as the underlying structure of information. Another possibility would be sharing through messages. Message should be aimed at sharing values but would comprise a call for cooperation and be aimed at producing changes in behaviour. Yet, the message is not more than a composed cluster of information, a profiled knowledge. One could feel that there is a way to go beyond these limiting ambitions. If it is not information, or knowledge, or a transfer of value patterns (whose?), or emission of messages, then it should be found in orientation to the quality result of our working process. One should count that searching for quality may well mean rethinking the entire idea of museums, a thorough reconceptualization. It has begun.

Can quality be knowledge which we have in such abundance? Quality is not in knowledge as knowledge is described in terms of scientific reliability and quantity. Science is led by literal interpretation of the Olympic slogan: *citius, altius, fortius* (faster, higher, stronger). Whichever direction it takes it counts only to arrive and not to travel. In schools as temples of linear reasoning, passing grades are most easily earned by memorizing. The same is done in our museums. Quality is successfully and consistently avoided. They tell the facts and say it was the truth we asked for. They tell us the facts and say it is good and beauty we wanted to know. They give us final answers for things that cannot be fathomed, and present eternity with what is material and fragile. No truth or beauty is a fact, let alone a palpable one. Unlike science would have it, the truth is a very elusive and delicate matter: even when "all" the facts are there, it may lack exact proportions between them and the circumstantial context (both defects being the basic ingredients of any convincing manipulation). Once exact sciences admit that there are no founding absolutes to support them but only levels of probability, we can see that knowledge is only part of technology, a method and tool and not the objective in itself. Any science is therefore a part of our analytical means to define, encircle, subdue, reach the Absolute - a task which proves impossible as we lack the "divine" constant. (A circle is the nearest symbol of the absolute. Its surface could have been calculated with some accuracy only through the discovery of the depletion number, the result being always an approximation of any "final", true surface. Quality is the same idea in our work.) Knowledge is therefore an ever increasing quantity of facts, a substance of an almost biological obsession of reproducing *the system* (Pirsig, 1981) or of feeding *the megamachine* (Mumford, 1986). The expectation of quality is constantly substituted by the ever new masses of knowledge.

We may feel like Paracelsus who proposed the existence of quintessence as additional element to the four as known by ancient chemists, which he describes as the spirit and strength of natural bodies. As the measure of true excellence, quality can be further defined through analysis of museum performance. This way we could narrow the zone of quality and approach some definition of what quintessence of heritage care is. (If we talk about sharing we must know that the communicational part cannot be done if there hasn't been adjusted, proper selection and research, therefore, the totality of working process must be taken into account.) As for criticism, it is as easy as naming all the vices (I have counted and described for my own use some 30 odd), but qualities are more difficult to describe without portraying just an idealist vision.

Quality is uniqueness in approach, experience or feeling. It is *beauty*, as irrational feeling of completeness, and coherence. It is *harmony*, as balance of divergent elements. It is *profoundness* of a thing or action when it touches the very essence of human experience, beyond mere material substance and quantitative measures. It is *dignity* as a noble feeling that a human being, as a divine creation, can experience, due to an act or situation that induces such a feeling. It is *catharsis* of sudden understanding, a revelatory vision surpassing personal interests and circumstances. It is *love*, as perfect communication, as perfect willingness to give for the pleasure of the other(s). But, like art, it can neither be literally learned nor taught. It has to be reached through the process of identification with the object. The methodological state that further describes it is creativity on the basis of ethical commitment. Quality prefers generality, universality, wholeness as it is "the continuing stimulus which causes us to create the world in which we live" (Pirsig, 1981).

As it is nowadays practically impossible to define a museum (and it will become even more so in the future), one should perhaps refer to heritage action or heritage communication. Besides its general characteristics, quality should have specific forms in that domain. The key word which may lead us to it is *choice*. Choice makes information, choice forms the message, choice is creation by the very fact as well as it is automatically an ethical act. Choice is creative, as it cannot be otherwise. Choice finally equals responsibility. If this all is true, then one should find myriad excuses for those colleagues of ours who, thanks to circumstances, can allow themselves the luxury of indiscriminatory collecting. The luxury of irresponsibility is then paid by their irrelevance in anything that governs the world. Wherever they are pin-pointed there is IT (information technology) to continue their perfection in "musealisation of the world" (J.Naissbit). But, at the end of information super-highway is again the stern face of Responsibility waiting to ask the same old questions.

Since our profession should be mission driven, the knowledge of quality will serve to define the mission. A scientific mind of our curators will hate dealing with non-objective terms. It will be always difficult to convince practitioners that our mission is retaining from the past as many values as possible and passing them to those in need: (1) to build quality in human relations and (2) to achieve quality in relation of humans toward the natural environment. It is difficult to accept that one's task is some vague, immeasurable *harmony*.

The quality should be sought for and defined in two critical phases of the working process: that of musealisation (input; from past to museums) and that of communication (output; from museums to users). Both phases are places of creativity, ethical involvement and, consequently, responsibility. Any part of the working process should be determined by quality, but the communicational one bears the strategic importance as its quality defines the product of the museum. Quality of product can be achieved only through the unity of subject

and object. When a researcher identifies with the object of his/her research the scientific methodology becomes only a convenience for the full understanding of the object (beyond the "truth" contained in the sum of the scientific facts). When a communicator wishes to achieve full impact identifying with the user (client? customer?) his/her museum becomes only a tool, an intermediary without any specific importance in itself; besides, a heritage object is idea not form: the first responds well to our strive for eternity (that's what we expect from our museums, don't we?) whereas the later is so painfully vulnerable and worldly.

So, finally, what would quality mean in heritage communication? We do not seem to have reached a status of a true profession, and among some elements that we still lack one is a defined product. Besides knowledge and entertainment, which we cannot be good enough at, and vague concepts of some betterment of the world should we strive further to label our product? We must. Heritage institutions are there to assure continuity and survival to the *identities* they have been created for. An identity can be anything from a distinctive culture, a person, a movement, a natural phenomenon or technological process. So museums are not an end but have to assure the participation of these identities in the incessantly developing world, in their own development. Heritage institutions are there to find, preserve and put back into the life the generative forces that would otherwise be lost, leaving us poorer and more vulnerable to reckless changes. Endangered values are found and processed in our institutions and then injected like adrenaline into the dying hearts of identities giving them life impulses, – returning the lost quality to them. (Once back into the life cycle, they are used and changed, taken as inspiration, enhancement or true content. They become formative elements of certain development.) So quality is not merely a method but an orientation, a purpose, a goal, assistance to whatever creates new viable life forms from the inner self.

Under this orientation the act of choice within the huge, immense and still growing masses of knowledge – through abstraction, analogy, and scientific selection – becomes the same old filtered experience that we usually call *wisdom*. That is our product. Throughout its history, mankind did not have at its disposal such mighty tools for preserving memory as we have today. The oral history was therefore a matter of choice of viable, usable, generative experiences, of preserving the vital forces that, generally speaking, meant advancement in quality. Being obsessed by eternity we should know that it cannot be found in collecting perfection (of neither physical nor recorded information) but can, most probably, be touched through the divine ambition of wisdom (in which quality "divine laws can be observed", as Paracelsus would say).

The wisdom is this aptitude and creative responsibility of choice what to retain, what to put into the collective memory, what values should deserve to be mediated. That would be an obvious view of the problem. But there is one more which changes the strategy and gives new quality to the opportunities offered by information technology (IT) besides revising the entire possessive obsession of museums. It would be right to propose that museum has to be a mechanism of forgetting – not remembering. It is so easy today to record anything we set our eyes upon: the omnipotent technology makes it so easy to store any quantity of knowledge that the crucial problem, dramatic as never before, will be what to forget. So far the success of our computers has been measured by the capacity of the human brain and entire technology regarded as extensions of ourselves. Rightfully so, and we shall remain the only measure available. Yet, we might be reaching limits of this logic as technology also follows its own. An absolutely perfect recall for humans is a neurotic state and in its perfection cannot be the natural extension of the human mind (medicine can offer perfect examples of retarded persons with an incredible capacity to remember). This ability can serve the human mind counter-

productively if we do not change it by introducing a quality approach. Wisdom is not so much the ability to remember as much as it is the capacity of selective oblivion. It is this, seemingly reverse perspective, that any theory of the heritage cause should appropriate. One may argue that nothing much changes but it does, indeed, if we put the responsibility of creative selection at the top of our priority list. In the situation when storage of information is so extremely easy and cheap, the imposition of choice should be a constant reminder of the need for quality. (Two good effects will immediately happen: there will be less information to handle and its ethical component will often become obvious.) Without selection our information sphere will amount to a completeness of the virtual world in its temporal and spacial dimension: it will become a sort of unusable map in the scale one to one. Then, we shall be faced again with the need to employ value judgements and quality approach to extract the essence, the wisdom. The good news is that any individual will have access to the stored information and will be able to select and combine new syntheses. The bad news is that the information sphere will be an unimaginable jungle, where literally anybody can put literally anything. Chaos cannot be a substitute for liberty, as freedom is not the denouncement of order. Some individuals will find their way as it was always the case, but the vast majority will need ready and fair assistance. The selection of quality may become a new profession if some, already there, do not see that the job belongs to them.

Forgetting is necessarily responsible in its selectiveness and judgments and it inevitably comprises ethical commitment. It is therefore a creative endeavour based upon common cause and public welfare, recognizing that they both derive from the definition of natural and civil rights of a human individual. Selectiveness, however, does not mean discrimination in information or knowledge by their origin, nature or hierarchy.

The philosophers explain the imperfections of the world as alienation of Being. Marx believed that the liberator will be the working man. The other side believed that it was the engineer and now it seems, however wrongly, that it can only be the entertainer. This cult of happiness through materialist affluence and the powerful drive of greed is a perfect picture of homonovus euphoria. Creating a world divided between the holders of power and happy fools is still another negative utopia, this time nonideological but global.

By believing that heritage may help the "salvation" (D. S. Ripley) of the world, one should suppose its logic and its institutions can serve well in assuring dignity to the human fate in this dangerous development. They can constantly serve as corrective and adaptive mechanisms to the "limping cultural sector" (T. Roszak) thus helping bewildered people who need some security and support in old fashioned wisdom. In a world where the individual is the prey of the System(s), assistance should rightfully come from a structure that takes no part in a fight for power, nor takes the side of the sort. One may wonder indeed whose side museums support, even when they are unable to see it (or maybe just because of it).

Besides the obvious need to define further the nature of wisdom, this approach leads to the reconceptualization of museums and structuring of the new theoretical basis of the profession(s). The result of reconceptualization will be an autonomous institution which one should call a *cybernetic museum* (T. Šola) whereas troublesome museology should give way to *mnemosophy* (T. Šola). Heritage professionals may not automatically become philosophers, but with this vision they might finally form a powerful, autonomous profession, able and willing to offer part of the missing wisdom and hope.

## Notes

Pirsig, Robert M., 1981. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance – An Inquiry into Values*, p. 317. Bantam New Age Book.

## Literature

Mumford, Lewis, 1986. *Mit o masini (1 & 2)*, Graficki zavod Hrvatske, Zagreb.

## **2. Seven Questions That Most Often Perplex My Students**

And my Attempt to Help Them with Short Answers

### 1. What is a museum?

A museum is a non-profit institution which collects, analyzes, preserves and presents objects belonging to cultural and natural heritage in order to increase the amount and quality of knowledge. A museum should entertain its visitors and help them relax. Using scientific arguments and modern language, it should assist people to understand the experience of the past. In its mutual relationship with its users, it should find in past experience the wisdom necessary for the present and the future. Another open definition which can include other institutions of a similar type concerned with heritage might be the following: The museum is a regular, non-profit, organized activity in the field of heritage. It is concerned either with the past or the present, depending on the special needs and circumstances of the community which it serves by mediating the complex human experience. It is a cybernetic mechanism meeting the permanent human need for the pleasure of understanding and the widening of experience, as well as a means to reach or defend a balance within the complex communal identity. The museum is a way to extend human senses and increase the possibilities of understanding for and sensitivity to heritage. Its aim is to promote the wise, harmonious and moderate development of its environment.

### 2. What is the role of the museum in a community/society?

The role of the museum is to preserve and improve the duration and quality of the complex identity upon which it has been established. The role of the museum is to influence directly the vital forces of the community to which it belongs, encouraging it to develop its creative resources throughout the inevitable process of change, and to preserve the indispensable harmony with its natural surroundings. The role of museums is to preserve the dignity and riches in diversity with the resulting growth in the quality of life. The role of the museum is to serve as a corrective means in a community and a test to its mechanisms of change. As a form of active adaptation of the changing circumstances in the world, the museum should take part in its balanced development. The museum is a place of permanent contemplation and quest, of transparency and verification. It is a forum where dilemmas and arguments for any democratic discussion are put forward. The museum is a place where standards of perfection in nature and human activities are appropriately interpreted, not in terms of the hierarchy of class, sex, group, or power, but as evidence of creative genius wherever it can be found.

### 3. What is the most important function of the museum?

The most important function of the museum is its active interchange with its users, i.e., its communication with the community. Thus conceived, the museum does not neglect other parts of its work process, defining clearly their final purpose. By scientific analysis and correct reading of the needs of its users, the museum selects facts and forms of their interpretation in order to meet those needs. The purpose of the museum is to endow the collective memory with a quality without which it is a mere accumulation of knowledge and

certainly not wisdom. Since it always takes something from the reality of the past, the museum can be realized only when it returns what it has taken, giving it back to the current time and to real people living in its environment. As a physical fact, the museum is only a visible part of the process ending in the realization of the museum in the reason, emotions, and changed behavior of its users. By the marketing logic, the museum is oriented toward its users. Consequently, it has attained the role of a council of the wise in the contemporary community by making scientific results useful in everyday life.

#### 4. Whose property are museums? With what consequences?

Museums are the property of the dominant forces in a society. They serve their needs, defend their systems of values, and advocate their aims. In this respect, they are frequently a part of the system of implicit manipulation of those whom they should serve according to democratic principles. The museum, as well as science, should be guided by impartial principles determined by general humanistic interests which have found their expression in natural and civil rights of man. Rather than being determined by different forms of exclusiveness and elitism, museums should be elitist in their scientifically based idealism and their consistent respect for ethic principles. Their concerns should range from their views of the past and their selection of material facts and ideas to the contents of messages and definitions of users to whom these messages are directed. In order to persist in this effort they should not be guided by the logic of profit. In order to detach their efforts from the exclusive interests of the minority that controls the mechanisms of finance, museologists, being members of a strong profession, should progress towards forms of autonomous action. The museum conceived in this way is a counteractive mechanism of the community in which and for which it exists. It is one of the institutions in charge of the balance and harmony without which the community is exposed to dangerous risks. The social recognition of its autonomous activities obliges it to reach a high scientific, ethical and communicative standard, accepting the possibility of becoming the voice of a minority at a given moment

#### 5. What is museology? Why is it necessary?

Museology is a developing science, if it has even become a true science at all in its one-century-long tradition. Since a name is always a convention, all this is probably only a theory whose aim is to explore the history of the museum as an institution in its social and culturally defined function, its systems of research, preservation and presentation, as well as the organization and classification of these institutions. It is difficult to expect a theory centered on an institution to become a science. The future science should therefore be looked for in a multidisciplinary field of existing scientific disciplines, and in the totality of heritage which all these disciplines share as their common interest, since they all try to answer the question of the purpose of remembering history, i.e., the question of heritage. As a modern, composite and openly eclectic science, heritology (T. Šola, 1982) is necessarily a new epistemological attempt to search for truth. A number of institutions, such as museums, libraries, archives, encyclopedias, data banks, expert systems, and a number of paramuseum institutions belonging to the industry of heritage follow this pursuit as their practical aim. As a proactive philosophy, the aim of heritology is to define heritage and its use and bring round the above professions to accept the definition of a mission which guarantees their importance and usefulness to the community due to the importance of heritage in their survival. As opposed to traditional museology, the purpose of this **general science of heritage** (T. Šola, 1990) is to

look for a way which would enable the activities in the field of heritage to result not only in the production of knowledge, but also in the production of wisdom. Therefore, the central problems of this science are principal questions of the purpose of history, the mission of institutions, the criterium of selection, and moral criteria which should constantly re-examine all its constitutive elements.

#### 6. How would you define or describe a museologist?

The museologist is a curator with the demands, questions and deliberations of a visitor. He is an expert in at least one scientific discipline, with the curator's knowledge and experience, matched with the ability to understand and identify himself with the actual and (even more) the potential visitor of the museum. Like the musician, the museologist is a mixture of vocation, expert training and talent. The museologist (if we decide to stick to the term in spite of its weaknesses) is an expert who understands both the concept of heritage and the idea of the museum. He can recognize it without written instructions and labels saying "museum". The museum as an institution is not the only answer to the need to protect and continue identity. Moreover, the museum is always necessarily a specific answer to specific needs, so that it should not become a model for an ideal solution. Consequently, museological knowledge is not a sum of methods and technologies, but creative intelligence. The museologist's professional awareness distinguishes between administrative and phenomenological differences, regarding boundaries within an institution, those between different institutions and those between sectors as barriers to cumulative effects of joint effort in the field concerned with the integrity of heritage. As opposed to the traditional museologist, who is more interested in the history of an institution and practical manuals for work in museums, the true museologist is equally interested in the heritage outside the museum: his ideal aim is certainly not the **musealization of the world** (J. Naisbitt, 1990) but de-institutionalization of museums as forms of consciousness (or, perhaps: conscience).

#### 7. What would you like to correct in the existing museums?

The activities of museums are not uniform. They are not carried out in the same way in different environments, cultures and countries. In some cases, people working in museums are so busy with occasional exhibitions that they have no time to think about a sound professional basis. Sometimes the profession has been marginalized, indulging in the last decade of utter lethargy. The existence and activities of museums in terms of an organized, institutionalized and standardized work process have been carried out in a historically brief period of time, so that the present level of development of these institutions is by no means final. We do not require models, but an urgent renewal of this institution.

Unfortunately, many traditional museums have understood the general atmosphere of urgent change as an obligation to modernize their outlook and equipment. Since some museums bear witness to a defined cultural tradition, such changes should not be carried out everywhere, since in some cases they imply an unnecessary disruption of traditional values. Deprived of any useful effects, they act just as external disguise. Mature museological views should enable us to see the total potential of the museum, and carry out a sensitive transformation which should be achieved as a change by addition: either new and modern institutions could be added, or existing institutions could take over some of the necessary functions of the cumulative effect through a new division of labor and new

mechanisms of cooperation (museum centres, heritage orientation centres, common services, joint depots, information networks).

Museum work is an occupation, but probably not a profession: anyone can found a museum, the ethics of museum work is still at the level of good manners and does not reach the most important questions of professional existence. An emancipated profession should enjoy an evident autonomy in its social status, and have an integrally defined mission linking its functions to other professions dealing with heritage. The status of the profession is important in defending its interests and mission.

The museological profession is probably one of the last to be recognized by legislature. Since it does not require obligatory professional training, the percentage of those who have undergone a museological training before getting a job at a museum is very low. A young biologist, or an engineer, becomes a curator or museologist only in virtue of his position at a museum. The failure of traditional museology has encouraged pragmatists who, in defending their status, call into question the existence and prosperity of the profession.

The museum as an institution should be redefined, and a scientific discipline should be established which would be constantly open to critical self-analysis as a mechanism of research important for the future of heritage and the profession.

Translated by Lelija Socanac