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## The museology discourse

Since the 1960s several attempts have been made to take stock of museological theory, often in order to assess the current status of museology as academic discipline. The first comprehensive publication about the theory of museology, being more than just a handbook on museum work, was published in 1968 by Jiri Neustupný on occasion of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the National Museum in Prague and the Moravian Museum in Brno (Neustupný 1968). From 1976 onwards the ICOM International Committee for Museology has played a central role in this discussion (Sofka 1992). Apart from the work of this committee mention should be made of the symposium on the theory of museology organised by the department of museology of the J.E. Purkinje University (now Masaryk University) at Brno in March 1965 (Stránský ed. 1966), both conferences on museology organised by the German National Committee of ICOM in 1971 and 1988 (Dyroff ed. 1973 and Auer ed. 1989), and the conference organised by the former Museum für Deutsche Geschichte (Berlin) together with the State Historical Museum (Moscow) in May 1988 (Grampp et al. 1988). Also mention should be made of some publications that contributed to the stock-taking. For example, a special issue of the Czech museum journal *Muzeologické sesity* published in 1983 on occasion of the 100th anniversary of the famous statement by J.G.Th. von Graesse (see below). Altogether, it was estimated that until the beginning of the 1980s at least 600 publications dealt with the subject matter of museology, mainly in the (former) socialist countries of Middle and East Europe (Razgon in Grampp et al. 1988: 28).<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1883 J.G.Th. von Graesse stated in his *Zeitschrift für Museologie und Antiquitätenkunde sowie verwandte Wissenschaften*: 'If somebody had spoken or written about museology as a branch of science thirty or even twenty years ago, the only response from many people would be a compassionate, contemptuous smile', meaning that museology had acquired the status of a discipline in its own right by then (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, after more than hundred years many workers in the museum field still reluctantly accept the idea of museology as something more than a series of practical activities. One of the main doubts regarding the profile of museology as an autonomous academic discipline concerns the relationship between museology as a discipline typically related to the field of museums at the one hand and the collection-related subject-matter disciplines at the other. The term subject-matter discipline commonly refers to those disciplines involved with the uses of museum collections as resource, like art history, anthropology, natural history, etc. Despite the close links between initiatives within the society to take care of its heritage and the subject-matter disciplines, it can be argued that the development of these tendencies and their institutionalisation are not initiated by scientific research, but (also) by the perceptions of the need of such institutions (in its widest sense) in society (Davallon 1993, Möbius 1986). It seems that the history of museology can be described as an emancipation process involving

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<sup>1</sup> Razgon more or less suggested that mainly museologists from East Europe contributed to the development of a theory of museology: 'In Rahmen der sozialistischen Staatengemeinschaft führten kollektive Anstrengungen der Museologen zu Ergebnissen, die bei weitem alles übertrafen, was in der vorangegangenen Zeit erreicht worden war'.

<sup>2</sup> Although the article was published anonymously, the author is generally considered to be the editor of the journal J.G.Th von Graesse. For a general description of this journal and information about the author, see Ennenbach 1982.

the breaking away of museology from the subject-matter disciplines and the profiling of its own cognitive orientation and methodology. This process has been described by the Czech museologist Zbynek Stránský as a three stage development: pre-scientific, empirical-descriptive, and theoretical-synthetic (Stránský 1980: 71), or in other words: formative stage, stage of unification and synthetisation and stage of maturity. Since the 1960s Stránský himself has been one of the key personalities who contributed to the establishment of the theoretical-synthetic stage.



Fig. 1. *Zeitschrift für Museologie und Antriquitätenkunde.*

Not by coincidence, the emancipation of museology as academic discipline is connected with the professionalisation process of museum work. This process has been described in terms of a series of revolutions. The term 'museum revolution' was used first by Duncan Cameron to characterise the radical changes during the 1950s and 1960s in the United States (Cameron 1970). In 1983, in his contribution to *Museologicke sesity* 9, the Yugoslavian museologist Antun Bauer distinguished between two museum revolutions.<sup>3</sup> According to Bauer the first

<sup>3</sup> Brazilian museologist Waldisa Russio distinguishes between five stages of development of museology as academic discipline (Russio 1989). The first stage is the creation of the Mouseion of Alexandria; the second

revolution in museum work was initiated by the publication of *Musées* (Paris 1931), based upon an inquiry among 41 leading museum authorities. This publication provided the professional perspective for the first international congress of museum workers in Madrid in 1934. Bauer's second museum revolution relates to the impact of the student revolts of 1968 on the museum field (Bauer 1983).

### *Museology's pre-paradigmatic stage*

The introduction of the term museology and its related term museography is not very well documented. Whereas the term museology seems to have come into being in the second half of the 19th century, the term museography was already used in the early 18th century. Interestingly, both terms seem to be used first in Germany.<sup>4</sup> The first recorded use of the term 'museography' is found in C.F. Neickelius' *Museographia oder Anleitung zum rechten Begriff und nützlicher Anlegung der Museorum oder Raritätenkammern* (1727). Museography was defined as the understanding concerning and the establishment of museums. The first recorded use of the term 'museology' is found in P.L. Martin's *Praxis der Naturgeschichte* (1869). In the second part of this book (titled 'Dermoplastik und Museology') museology is defined as the exhibition and preservation of collections of naturalia.



Fig. 2. C.F. Neickelius, *Museographia* (1727).

The fact that both terms were used in the context of early handbooks on museum work reflects the feeling that problems concerning collecting techniques, conservation methods,

stage refers to the Renaissance; the third stage is the period of Enlightenment and the Romantic period. The fourth stage, which is not clearly dated (around 1900 ?), sees the recognition of the necessity of professionalisation and specialisation in connection with the emergence of new publics, resulting from urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation. The fifth stage is the present time, characterised by new reflections on the social responsibilities of museums in view of world disasters.

<sup>4</sup> According to French dictionaries the term 'muséologie' did not appear before 1931. Apart from an accidental use in David Murray's *Museums, their history and their use* (1904) both terms seem to be avoided by English museum professionals (Agren 1992).

registration, storage, exhibition design, etc. required solutions which did not automatically arise from the methodology of the subject-matter discipline(s) involved. Nevertheless, the theory and practice of museum work was commonly considered as subordinated to and derived from the subject-matter discipline. In this sense museology - when at all accepted as a science - was considered an applied science.<sup>5</sup> Such was the view held by Neickelius and, despite his bold statement, also by Von Graesse. The conceptual frame work of the subject-matter discipline was thought to be sufficient for museum work; museology needed no conceptual frame work in itself. Therefore, Stránský refers to this approach as the 'pre-scientific phase' of museology as academic discipline. Other authors have described this formative phase as 'museolore stage' (Tsuruta 1980: 47) or 'Implizitstufe' (Jahn 1979: 270). In terms of Kuhn we could also call this phase museology's pre-paradigmatic stage (Kuhn 1976).

### *First museum revolution*

The professionalisation trend that started at the end of the 19th century - of which Von Graesse's journal was an early prove - gradually acknowledged that many of the practical problems are shared by all kinds of museums. New concepts were introduced in connection with a strong educational orientation. This new school of thought in museology has been called 'museum modernization movement' (Carle & Metzener 1991).<sup>6</sup>

Whether or not the term museology was used to denote the emerging academic field, the museum modernisation movement brought about many activities that contributed to the shaping of a shared paradigm. Handbooks were published and training courses were established. In addition associations and specialised journals were founded. The first museums association was founded in 1889 in the United Kingdom (Museums Association), followed in 1906 by the foundation of the American Association of Museums. In 1901 the Museums Association started its *Museums Journal*, the first national journal for the museum field as a whole. In 1908 the first museum training program in the United States was offered at the Pennsylvania Museum (Philadelphia). Museology thus gradually became recognised as a field of interest with its own identity. As 'museum studies' or 'Museumskunde' museology entered its empirical-descriptive phase. The stage of unification and systematisation is also described as 'museography stage' (Tsuruta 1980) and 'Emanzipationsstufe' (Jahn 1979).

The approach to museum work gradually shifted from multidisciplinary to interdisciplinary, but an all encompassing museological theory and methodology was not yet developed. It is significant that, for example, in the United States museum training programs are almost exclusively called 'museum studies programs' rather than 'museology programs'. The term 'museology' is avoided as these courses are developed on an empirically-descriptive level (Malt 1987). Probably for the same reasons French authors preferred the term 'muséographie' rather than 'muséologie'. Anyway, at the first General Conference of the International Council of Museums (1948) its president, George Salles, pointed out that one of the main changes brought about by ICOM was that museology ('la mission muséographique') was increasingly regarded as the connecting factor in museum work.

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<sup>5</sup> In this respect Gluzinski speaks of 'museological scientism' (also described as the 'institutional-instrumental approach') as 'a particular attitude of museologists, who see the museum as an auxiliary organ of science, which blocks then the purely museological point of view, effectively draws their attention from its basic problem of the substance of the museum' (Gluzinski 1980: 439).

<sup>6</sup> This agrees with Russio's 4th stage of development.

### *Second museum revolution*

During the 1960s attempts were made to define museology as a science and to have it accepted as academic discipline to be taught at universities. Not by coincidence this (new) interest in museology was (again) related to a 'revolution in museum work'.<sup>7</sup> This revolution concerned the recognition of the social (educational) role of museums. In the catalogue of the exhibition 'Van Gothiek tot Empire' organised by the Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam) in 1957 J. Guérin, chief-curator of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Paris) wrote: 'The newest museography has placed on record principles and rules and claimed the status of science, which could provide the ideal museum director universal standards'. The principles of modern museography (= museum practice) as given by Guérin were: recreation next to education, a dynamic presentation of the objects, and hospitality.

On an international level a major turning point was the ninth General Conference of ICOM, held in Grenoble and Paris in 1971 on the theme 'The Museum in the Service of Man, Today and Tomorrow': 'After a quarter of a century of focusing on the traditional roles of museums - collecting, conservation, curatorship, research and communication - ICOM in the Grenoble sessions, now placed a major emphasis on the potential role of museums in society, in education and cultural action, arguing that the traditional primary functions of museums should be seen as "first and foremost in the service of all mankind", and of a constantly changing society' (Boylan 1996).

At the UNESCO International Regional Museum Seminar on the role of museums in education, held in Rio de Janeiro (1958), museology was defined as a branch of knowledge concerned with the study of the purposes and the organisation of museums, thus re-emphasising the paradigm that was developed during the early 20th century. This new approach is reflected in the resolutions adopted at the 11th General Assembly of ICOM (= 10th General Conference) at Copenhagen (1974). It was concluded that museology was still subject to social and cultural situations belonging to the past. The resolutions call for a transformation of the museum based on the demands of the community in its cultural, environmental and demographic position. Investigation, conservation, and preservation are called 'the traditional and still essential functions', but 'conditions of the modern world lead the museum towards assuming new commitments and adopting new forms'. These new commitments should be based on the interpretation of 'the cultural needs of the community completely independent of circumstantial factors, with an understanding of the problems of the contemporary individual and a respect for the liberty of information'. It is considered to be 'imperative to bring up to date a museology still subject to social and cultural situations belonging to the past' (quoted from Resolutions 1-5).

### *The emancipation of museography*

The first full ICOM General Conference in 1948 called for the proper recognition and training of the museum's technical staff using the then current title of 'museographers' to cover a wide

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<sup>7</sup> The same movement became influential in Europe during the 1970s en 1980s. In France and the United Kingdom the 'new museology' movement found its origin in this museum revolution (see Chapter 5). In the initial concept of the Treatise of museology the term was also used for a chapter on the transition of 'the museum as temple to the museum as forum' (*ICOM News* 24, 1971, (4): 21). In 1989 the term 'museum revolution' was used again in the invitation and programme of a seminar on natural history museums organised by the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 27-29 September 1989). The use of the term refers to the same new approach to museum work as advocated by Cameron. In the same sense the term is used by Renaud 1992.

range of support staff, including collections care and exhibition technicians (Boylan 1996). The following General Conference, in London in 1950, recognised restorers as a distinct museological profession. The next General Conference, held in Milan in 1953, recognised the need for museums to have education specialists with teaching qualifications.

The 'emancipation of museography' was a logical consequence of the 'revolution in museum work' during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. There was an increasing concern about the improvement of museum practice. For each field experiences were collected and confronted with knowledge from outside the museum field. An example is the publication of Jürgen Rohmeder's *Methoden und Medien der Museumsarbeit* (1977). In his introduction Rohmeder states that, in general, history museums are led by historians, natural history museums by biologists, art museums by art historians, etc. This might be necessary to keep control of the subject-matter aspects of the museum, but, as Rohmeder concludes, it is not enough to make a museum a public institution. Considering museums primarily as educational institutes, Rohmeder suggests to take communication science as starting point and frame of reference.

In this way professionalisation in the museum field paradoxically led to the divergence of a wide variety of professional disciplines: conservation/restoration and education, with in their footsteps registration (documentation), exhibition design, public relations, security, etc. The concept of the curator as the chief carrier of theoretical museology (as suggested at the 1965 conference of ICOM) and determining factor in the museum administration was undermined. This situation initiated two reactions. Firstly, the curator, whose position was also weakened because of shifts in scientific perspectives, attempted to give new theoretical foundation of his work. Secondly, in the field of training museologists tried to overcome the diverging tendencies by creating an unifying theoretical frame work.

### *Theoretical museology*

During the seventh General Conference of ICOM (New York 1965), which main theme was training of museum personnel, it was concluded that it was necessary to develop university courses in theoretical museology. It was the first time an overall theme was chosen for the General Conference of ICOM. In view of the museum revolution of the 1960s/70s with its emphasis on the renewal of museum work, it is not surprising that museum training was chosen as the main theme. As a result of this conference a meeting of experts on training was organised in Brno in 1967.<sup>8</sup> This meeting brought about the creation (in 1968) of an international committee on training (ICTOP).

In view of the content of the papers presented on the subject at the conference of 1965, it is clear that despite the use of the adjective 'theoretical', museology was considered predominantly an applied discipline, which content is empirical-descriptive. The resolutions of the 1974 conference show that within ICOM in ten years time the concept of museology evolved from an applied discipline towards an independent field in connection with the changing views of the social role of the museum institute. From a predominantly research institute the museum became a social-cultural institute with an educational function. It is significant that during the 1960s a new edition was prepared of the Soviet-Russian handbook on museum work (first published in 1955) adding some theoretical chapters, including one about museology as a science. At the same time, museologists from the German Democratic Republic proposed the use of the term 'Museumwissenschaft' to replace 'Museumskunde', thus

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<sup>8</sup> Incorrectly referred to as 'the first effort to have museology recognised as a scientific discipline in universities' (*Museum* 32, 1980, (3): 158).

emphasising a shift towards a theoretical-synthetic stage of the discipline. On an international level ICOM and UNESCO initiated the preparation of a treatise on museology. At one of the first meetings of the editorial board (1971) much attention was paid to the balance between museological theory and practice. The whole work should be 'a coherent structure organised in a single and all-embracing conception of museology'. Obviously there was no difference of opinion about the content of museological theory. However, the treatise of museology was never realised. Apart from a demarcation dispute between the ICOM International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) and the ICOM International Committee for the Training of Museum Personnel (ICTOP) the preparation seems to have been hampered by a new tendency of the 1960s and 1970s: the 'emancipation of museography'. Another problem was the questioning of the existing paradigm. The apparent unanimity of 1971 was replaced - at least within ICOFOM - by a confusing multitude of competing paradigms.

### *Washburn vs. Neustupný*

Although from a metamuseological point of view the transition of the empirical-descriptive to the theoretical-synthetic stage started to take place around 1970, museology as an autonomous academic discipline is not generally accepted yet. Many museum workers even reject such notion. A typical example at the beginning of the transition phase is the American museum worker Wilcomb E. Washburn. He ironically used the term 'grandmotherology' in connection with museology to show the - in his eyes - ridiculous pretensions to provide for a theoretical basis for museum work (Washburn 1967). Washburn rejected the idea of establishing a museum profession and considered 'the almost total lack of theoretical discussion of the museum's right to claim professional status for its housekeeping skills [as] a clue to the barrenness of the philosophy underlying the claim to professional status'. His paper does not deal with the content of museology as academic discipline, but it is clear that where there cannot be such a thing as a museum profession, there is no place for a museum theory. To Washburn museum work has no autonomous identity, but is derived from the subject-matter disciplines. Like the keeping of libraries, the keeping of museums is to serve the user and to facilitate his purpose. Following the example of librarians and archivists, the professional museum administrator and the educator tend to downgrade the subject-matter over which he presides as administrator, and to upgrade the techniques by which that subject-matter is preserved or communicated to the public, at the cost of the real purpose of the museum which is to support scientific research.

Washburn's critical attitude is dictated by the shift in the balance of power within the museum organisation. Professional administrators and educators have taken control over parts of the museum domain (i.e. the emancipation of museography). Washburn represents the group of scientists who feel threatened by this development. Following naturally from this line of argument he rejects the idea of museology as independent discipline.

In the same period the Czech museologist Jiri Neustupný took another route. Whereas Washburn is not aware of the emerging museological thinking in East Europe, Neustupný has read Washburn's publications in *Curator*. This one-way flow of information is characteristic. It influenced the museology discourse to great extent, at least till the end of the 1970s.

Neustupný was one of the first to discuss the status of museology as academic discipline. His ideas were first formulated in 1950 (in his PhD thesis *Problems of modern museology*) and were fully developed in 1968 (Neustupný 1968). At the end of his life Neustupný once more

summarised his views on the status of museology as academic discipline (Neustupný 1980 and 1981).

Initially, Neustupný made a subtle distinction between theory and methodology at one side and science at the other. For him museology is a theory, a methodology of museum work, not a science. As a field of theory museology has its own identity and is even a relatively independent branch of the theoretical knowledge concerned with a relatively independent, well-defined and culturally important aspect of human activity in museums, but as a science museology does not have its own specific method of study. Museology is, says Neustupný, an aggregate of scientific disciplines, each of the disciplines which it comprises has its own subject of study. In this connection the term 'museological discipline' is introduced. Each 'museological discipline' has its own specific method of work, corresponding to the character of the branch of science represented in the museum collections. For example, historical museology uses the same method as history. In 1980, however, Neustupný abandoned his formal objections: 'The question, asked by some authors, whether museology is a separate academic discipline or not has little significance within the contemporary system of knowledge and contemporary sociology of science. Even the most classical academic disciplines have undergone considerable changes, extensions and regroupings during the last decades. As a consequence of such changes "theory" and "discipline" appeared as quite synonymous terms. What is important with regard to museology it that it does exist as a discipline, irrespective of whether, according to a prescriptive judgement, it should be separate or should not'.

Contrary to Washburn, Neustupný has accepted museology as scientific discipline, but Neustupný is not able to define its cognitive orientation. Museology is considered by him as an aggregate of different theories and methodologies. Starting from the work of Neustupný it was Zbynek Stránský who made the decisive step towards the formulation of a theoretical-synthetic orientation in museology.

### *Shifting perspective*

The historical development of the museological orientation within the museum field can be described in terms of a major shift of perspective shifted from 'special museology' (i.e. museology as seen from the perspective of subject-matter disciplines) towards 'applied museology' (i.e. museology as seen from the perspective of support disciplines) and finally towards 'theoretical museology' (i.e. museology seen as a genuine academic discipline). In the course of this development the subject-matter content of museum theory decreased.

The ICOM International Committee for Museology, founded in 1976, has played a crucial role as to the acceptance of museology as a 'science'. However, even when they accept the possibility of a theoretical-synthetic museology, most authors consider the transition from the empirical-descriptive to the theoretically synthetic stage as not yet completed. In this respect Gluzinski distinguishes between Real Museology and Postulated Museology (Gluzinski 1983). Real Museology refers to the present state (empirical-descriptive), museology not yet being a self-contained discipline. Postulated Museology refers to the future state (theoretical-synthetic), which will eventually emerge from the theoretical discussions. The main drawback in the transition from Real to Postulated Museology is the lack of a generally accepted new paradigm which fulfils the present needs of theory as well as practice. The 'emancipation of museography' and the fragmentation of the museum profession have undermined the current



paradigm. Different new paradigms have come to the fore but have not yet crystallised into schools.

Even if the gradual emergence of the theoretically synthetic stage is not yet generally accepted the dawn of the mathematical stage has been heralded. Attempts have been made to apply mathematical models for museological phenomena. Perhaps the most interesting example is Thompson applying Thom's catastrophe theory in the description of the biography of artefacts (Thompson 1979). Other attempts are concerned with visitor behaviour (Cialdea 1988), the quality of collections (the *Arts & Auction* survey of American corporate collections), the degree of museality (Suler 1981), and the growth of collections (Van Mensch 1989). These approaches do not only aim at developing descriptive models, but also claim to have predictive value.

### *Doubts and criticism*

The Polish museologist Wojciech Gluzinski pointed at the necessity of clear concepts. Museology cannot be both a science of a given field of activity and this field of activity itself at the same time. In the context of his work the museum worker is not practising museology as a science in the same manner that an historian is practising history. What this museum worker is practising is either a science different from museology, or a practical activity based on the knowledge of museology (Gluzinski 1983). This view agrees with the distinction between museology and museography as theory and practice of museum work.

Even if we accept Gluzinski's reasoning and consequently use the term museology for the theoretical component of a given field only, we are confronted with a confusing diversity of approaches. There is no consensus among museologists concerning profile and identity of the discipline. Different approaches have not yet crystallised into 'schools'. According to Razgon there is no need to be alarmed by the lack of a generally accepted definition of the subject-matter of museology. In a contribution to the first ICOFOM symposium (1978) he refers to other disciplines (like philosophy, sociology, ethnography, historical geography, cybernetics, ecology) coping with similar problems. Nevertheless, the problem of identity continued to preoccupy many museologists, despite Neustupný's question - ten years before Razgon's remark - if it is really necessary to ask whether museology is a scientific discipline (Neustupný 1968).

Notwithstanding Razgon's reassuring words and despite Neustupný's rhetoric question there appears to be a strong wish among a certain group of museologists to have museology recognised as a science by becoming a discipline accepted by the academic world. As Judith Spielbauer suggests, the underlying assumption seems to be that if museology has a place in the university, museologists will gain in prestige, support and position within the museum profession and the community at large (Spielbauer 1981). In this respect there is a close connection between the attempts to have museum work recognised as a profession in countries like the United States, and attempts to have museology recognised as a science in the former socialist countries. A key role is played by those involved in training programmes. The status of museum training programmes very much depends on the degree in which museum work is considered a profession and the degree in which museology is recognised as a more or less autonomous discipline. At the same time, in order to teach museology it is necessary to develop conceptual frame-works and a clear terminology.

Perusal of museological literature, notably ICOFOM's *Museological Working Papers* and *ICOFOM Study Series* reveal a recurring set of basic questions: is museology a discipline, and if so, what is its object of knowledge, its purpose of understanding and its methodological orientation? Many authors mention the need to analyse and classify the variety of opinions in order to promote well-structured discussion. It is a necessary step to be taken, even if some authors seem to doubt its usefulness. However, the rather optimistic view expressed by Tomislav Sola: '...one thing is certain: somewhere in the future individual witnessings and annunciations will merge into a compact system ...' (Sola 1984) could be met with some doubt.

Beneš explains the lack of unanimity in three ways (Beneš 1981). Firstly, museum work has the disadvantage of heterogeneity of documents (objects) which belong to at least twenty different branches of science. This is perhaps the main reason why the work in libraries and archives has already brought about some shared higher level of conceptualisation than work in museums. A second reason for the lack of unanimity is the fact that most museum workers tend to concentrate on their own domain. Especially those working in the field of research deny the scientific character of other museum activities. They identify themselves with the subject-matter discipline, rather than their specific museum related task, which is re-enforced by the fact that usually no special museological pre-entry qualifications are required. Finally, museum workers are inclined to restrict their interest to their own type of museum, not identifying themselves with the whole museum field. In the early 1980s Zeller made a study of the professional profile of educators in major American art museums. The result of this study confirms Beneš' observations. Zeller found that art museum educators see themselves primarily as art historians, i.e. as subject-matter specialists rather than educators or museum workers (Zeller 1984).

According to Stránský some museum workers fear that transition from the empirical to the theoretical phase would separate museological theory from the reality of the museum itself (Stránský 1981b). This same fear might be reflected by the points raised by Beneš. Moreover, as Burcaw put in his usual very direct way: 'In the United States, and in western countries generally I believe, we tend to view museum work more from the aspect of measurable results than from theoretical foundations' (Burcaw 1981: 30). In order to avoid a theory that is disconnected from practice museum workers tend to concentrate on a special subject-matter discipline, a particular museum or category of museums, or one particular technical field. On the other hand, in one of his early publications Kenneth Hudson expressed the specificity of the museum/museological situation as opposed to the subject-matter interests: 'The museum [...] removes the picture or the statue from its context and compels us to see it as an abstract think, a work of art, demands a new attitude, special training and a specialised phraseology' (Hudson 1977: 11-12).

The obstinacy of museum curators to stick to the view of museology as applied science can partly be explained by the structure of the museum field, and especially the organisational structure of museums. Museum curators have every reason to keep the status quo. They resist new paradigms as these might threaten the current balance of power. Their reactions on the work of ICOFOM are sometimes hostile. Even within the committee doubts were expressed as to the applicability of theoretical and metatheoretical thinking. As one of the opponents wrote: 'We should stop worrying about defining museology. To define museology and to give it a spiritual and even metaphysical connotation seem to be the hobby of some museologists.'

They are wasting their time. Museology is simply a tool to good museum organisation and management' (Nair 1986: 227).

In this respect some authors metaphorically refer to religion, like Tomislav Sola who explains: '... so far we are in the worse position than fourteen century catholic church with all its popes and schisms. We have some canon law and liturgical rules (i.e. museography that we ambitiously call museology) but we do not have religio curatoris, some theology of ours - whether our god is museum object or museum itself, it is still some golden calf, - nothing else. [...] We have some considerable epiphanic messages, but we still lack our bible' (Sola 1992: 16). Hudson uses the same metaphor to express his abhorrence of an unifying theory in museum work: 'Every profession has its theology and its own ways with heretics. I personally mistrust all theologies' (Hudson 1989: 188). Nevertheless, museology has send out her apostles to spread the word (Sofka in Auer et al. 1989), but their emphasis on the need of a theory often has a defensive character. 'An error is made when we think that a theory which serves practice should be the theory of practice. [...] It is not the theory of practice, but the theory of reality lying in the range of practice ...' (Gluzinski 1987: 116). A remark made by Burcaw may be added to this statement of Gluzinski: 'Theory and its application may grow at different rates. In the past, the museum raced ahead. In some locations and among some museum workers the opposite may now be true. But growing apart does not have to mean divorce. It may mean only that one partner needs to catch up' (Burcaw 1983: 23). On the same subject Gluzinski states: 'It has appeared that museology is not able to deal with that what is new. This crisis is not however caused by the internal development of museology, which may happen to old renowned sciences, but by external factors that are not dependent on museology. It indicates that within museology there is a lack of a mechanism which would correct its own development and could stimulate it' (Gluzinski 1987: 118).

### *Theory and practice*

Museological practice can have its own autonomous development. This development is initiated by different factors:

- social (socio-economic, socio-cultural, socio-political) developments outside the museological field;
- scientific developments within the field of material culture studies, natural history, art and art history, etc.;
- developments within the field of management, marketing, education, etc.;
- the influence of (museum) professionals with non- museological training;
- the general creativity of people.

What can be the role of theory? Bedekar has given a useful overview of the theory-practice polarity (Bedekar 1987: 51-52). In his view museology is related to museums in three ways. Firstly it follows the initiative taken by museums in solving their own professional problems creatively or at least innovatively. Secondly, museology may generate ideas, concepts, skills, methods and techniques which ought to be accepted by museums. Thirdly, museology does contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of museums when the surveys, teachings and researches in the formal museology centres get transmitted to students or trainees who are ready to turn their insights into plans and projects or for updating the contemporary procedures in museums.

As academic discipline and as new foothold for the museum field, museology has to create a structural consistency, integrating the different approaches as mentioned in preceding chapters. As such museology may contribute to the development of the museum field in a five-fold way:

- serving as a clearing house of ideas and practices;
- providing an unifying principle in museum work;
- providing basic concepts for the development of governmental policies concerning 'cultural resource management';
- providing the theoretical basis of the curriculum of professional training courses;
- providing a theoretical frame of reference for the development of research programmes.

Gluzinski presented a general model of a mechanism to solve the dysfunctional divide between theorists and practitioners. This model starts from three parameters: museology ('Real Museology discourse'), training ('training discourse'), museum ('activity of museums'). The development of museological knowledge enriches the training's content and thus indirectly influences the perfection of the museum praxis, which in its turn finds its reflection in the 'RM discourse' and the cycle is repeated. This model emphasises the special role of those involved in training programmes. The 'cycle', however, is no one-way direction. Museology as theory may contribute to the development of practice in more than one way.

The rationale behind the development of museology as academic (theoretical) discipline is the relationship between theory and training. The conceptualisation, structuring and standardisation of terminology are 'by-products' of teaching. The contribution of theory and training to the development of practice depends on the degree of acceptance by the museum profession. Some of the limiting conditions of this acceptance have been mentioned before. In addition it should be noted that the museum profession is not a closed profession. Pre-entry training is not obligatory, and sometimes even seems to be a handicap (see Chapter 9). The future of museology as academic discipline is in the relationship between theory and practice, i.e. the ability of theoreticians to participate in and contribute to relevant discussions. One way is to provide a necessary 'critical objectivity' (Sola 1992: 11) which will enable the museum worker to transcend the specialist outlooks of the subject matter disciplines and of the 'museological disciplines'.

### *Criteria*

In 1965 Stránský was the first to summarise the different views held among museum workers as to the question whether museology could be considered a true academic discipline (Stránský 1966). Ten years later (in 1975) Villy Toft Jensen conducted a survey among museum workers as to their opinions about museology. The results were published five years later in the first issue of *Museological Working Papers* (Jensen 1980). Jensen's findings proved to be very similar to Stránský's. On the basis of the work of Stránský and Jensen distinction can be made between three lines of thought:

- museology is an independent science,
- museology is an applied science, i.e. concerns the application of the theory and methodology of subject-matter disciplines,
- museology is not a scientific discipline.

Jensen did not quantify the responses to his questionnaire. The majority of contributors to *Museological Working Papers* 1 and 2, dealing with the question 'Is museology a science?', considered museology an independent discipline or at least on the way to become one. Only a few considered museology a field of action rather than a field of study. When in 1990 during a conference in Leicester a similar survey was held 90 % of the participants of that conference considered museology an independent discipline, while only 4 % argued that museology as a discipline makes no sense. It seems that during the 1980s museology gradually has been accepted as academic discipline.

Stránský mentions three basic criterions to consider museology a genuine academic discipline: historicity, an inner logic of scientific knowledge, and objective social need (Stránský, unpublished paper 1989). As to the first criterion authors like Ennenbach, Gluzinski, Neustupný, Schreiner and Stránský, put much effort in demonstrating the continuity of museological thought from the 16th century onwards. Either Samuel von Quicchebergh (who published in 1565 his *Inscriptiones vel tituli theatri amplissimi, complectentis rerum universitatis singulias materias et imagines eximias* on the management of collections) or Johann Daniel Major (who published a similar book in 1674 titled *Unvorgreiffliches Bedencken von Kunst- und Naturalien-Kammern insgemein*) is considered being the first theoretical museologist. In addition Ennenbach refers to the contribution to museology made by philosophers like Comenius, Leibniz and Goethe (Ennenbach 1983). The general conclusion is that at least the criterion of historicity is fulfilled. As to the inner logic Stránský elaborated five questions that need to be answered (Stránský loc.cit.):

- Does museology have a special object of knowledge?
- Does museology have a characteristic scientific language?
- Does museology have its own characteristic methods?
- Does museology have its own scientific system?
- Can museology be fitted in the existing system of sciences?

These are in fact the building stones of the discipline's paradigm. They give shape to the identity of the discipline. In the present transition from the empirical-descriptive to the theoretically-synthetic stage of development follows from different attempts to create a new paradigm of the basis of the points raised by these five questions.<sup>9</sup>

As to the criterion of social need some authors, like Jahn and Stránský, point out that the most decisive criterion whether museology is to be considered a science, is the need for such scientific knowledge. Within the frame work of marxist-leninist philosophy this is a most relevant aspect, especially since according to this philosophy the needs of the society can objectively be determined. In western publications the social accountability of the discipline takes another form. It seems to focus on the social relevancy of museological practice rather than museological theory. The relevancy of the theory is related to the needs of the profession itself. In this respect it has been stated that the acceptance of the discipline by the workers in the field is a *conditio sine qua non*. But not only do they need to accept the theory, they should also have the ability to absorb theoretical ideas, and they should have the willingness to apply them.

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<sup>9</sup> The discussion concerning the specific cognitive orientation in museology will be discussed in Chapter 4. In addition attention will be paid to the different views concerning the purpose of museological understanding (Chapter 5). The scientific system, i.e. the structure of museology as a discipline, will be discussed in Chapter 6. The aspect of scientific language is discussed in Chapter 8. The aspect of methodology is discussed in Chapter 7 in relation with the distinction between museology and the subject-matter disciplines.

New academic disciplines do not come into existence by proclamation or statement; they develop through their activities, which are reactions to the needs of the developing society. Their validity and concomitantly their recognition derive from the internal integrity, structure and methodology of the discipline itself. Despite the rather cynical, or sometimes hostile attitude of some museum workers, museology is widely recognised as a field of interest having its own set of characteristics. These characteristics mainly follow the needs of the professional field that museology intends to cater for. Significantly, the main contributions to the development of museology come from those involved in training, as it is especially the field of professional training that profits from a theoretical framework. But significant is also that as yet no textbooks are available (at least not in English) that reflect this notion of museology as an autonomous discipline. It shows that the transition from 'proto-science' to 'normal science' is not completed. The old museum-centred paradigm was adequate only to establish the plausibility of the discipline and to provide a rationale for the various 'craft-rules' which govern practice. To Kuhn the demarcation criterion is whether the discipline has puzzles to solve. Apart from object-oriented subject-matter research, the appearance of the puzzle-solving approach in the museum field was brought about by other disciplines that took an interest in museums as research object rather than museology. The emergence of museology as scientific discipline is partly an attempt to re-claim the museum field as research object by the museum field itself.

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