

# THE BLIND FORERUNNER, THE SILENT VISIONARY, AND THE STONE GUEST: HIRT, HEGEL, AND GOETHE IMAGINING THE “NEVERMUSEUM”\*

O PRECURSOR CEGO, O VISIONÁRIO SILENCIOSO E O CONVIDADO DE PEDRA:  
HIRT, HEGEL E GOETHE IMAGINANDO O “NUNCA-MUSEU”

Francesca Iannelli\*\*

**ABSTRACT:** The main aim of this paper is to reflect on the contribution offered by G.W.F. Hegel and J.W. Goethe to the musealization process that affected Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In order to do so, however, it will be essential to focus on an unjustly forgotten figure, such as that of Aloys Hirt (1759-1837), an uncomfortable and marginalized figure with whom both Hegel and Goethe were in contact, but who was also fundamental to the conception of the museum institution in Berlin. Hirt, in fact, stood on the threshold, poised between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but was also between two giants of the age such as Hegel and Goethe, both of whom developed a rather original and evocative “museum” sensibility, which could be fruitfully recovered and brought into synergy with Hirt’s museum program to re-think the museal institution, helping to make real the “Nevermuseum”, that had yet to exist.

**KEYWORDS:** Musealization, Aesthetics, Museum, Nevermuseum

**RESUMO:** O objetivo principal deste artigo é refletir sobre a contribuição oferecida por G.W.F. Hegel e J.W. Goethe ao processo de musealização que afetou a Alemanha no final do século XVIII e início do século XIX. Para tanto, contudo, será essencial focar em uma figura injustamente esquecida, como a de Aloys Hirt (1759-1837), uma figura incômoda e marginalizada com quem tanto Hegel quanto Goethe tiveram contato, mas que também foi fundamental para a concepção da instituição museológica em Berlim. Hirt, de fato, permaneceu no limiar, equilibrando-se entre os séculos XVIII e XIX, mas também estava entre dois gigantes da época como Hegel e Goethe, os quais desenvolveram uma sensibilidade “museológica” bastante original e evocativa, que poderia ser frutiferamente recuperada e colocada em sinergia com o programa museológico de Hirt para repensar a instituição museal, ajudando a tornar real o “Nunca-museu”, que ainda não existia.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Musealização, Estética, Museu, Nunca-museu

Second star to the right,  
This is the path  
And then straight on till morning,  
Then you find the road yourself,  
It leads to Neverland.  
Maybe this will seem strange to you,  
But rationality  
Got you carried away  
And now you’re almost convinced that  
Neverland cannot exist.  
(Edoardo Bennato, *Neverland*, 1980)

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\* Artigo convidado.

\*\* Full Professor, Roma Tre University (Department of Philosophy, Communication and Performing Arts). E-mail: francesca.iannelli@uniroma3.it. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6295-8228>. This research was conducted within the Project “Intersections: real museum, ideal museum, virtual museum with and beyond Hegel” at the Italian Institute of Germanic Studies in Rome, Italy (2023–2025).



While it may seem peculiar—especially to 21st-century viewers who see Berlin as a city of museums and culture, if not a true “open air museum”<sup>1</sup>—in truth, Germany, and particularly its current capital, came late to actively participate in the process of musealization that was well underway in the late eighteenth century in other European countries<sup>2</sup>, especially France<sup>3</sup>.

This paper will focus on an unjustly forgotten figure, Aloys Hirt (1759–1837), who was fundamental to the conception of the museum institution in Berlin despite being considered inconvenient and marginalized<sup>4</sup>. Hirt, in fact, stood on the threshold, on unstable and slippery terrain, poised between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also found himself between two giants of the age: Hegel and Goethe.

First, however, it is worth recalling in more detail who the refined “Kunstkenner” (art connoisseur) Aloys Hirt was and how he became “Grundervater” (founding father) of the Berlin museum institution.

### 1. Hirt, or the “blind forerunner”

In a letter written by Hirt dated May 10, 1830, the then renowned Berliner *Altertumswissenschaftler* and Professor for Archeology reminded the Weimar Olympian of their distant meeting in the Eternal City:

Es sind jetzt 43 Jahre, wo ich mit Ihnen zuerst unter den Denkmälern Roms wanderte. Ich freue mich immer zu sehen, mit welcher treuen Anhänglichkeit die Musen Sie bis zur Stunde (möge es noch lange geschehen!) durch das Leben begleiten. Was ich in jener Zeit Ihrem Umgange und später Ihrer gütigen Ermunterung auf meiner damals betretenen Bahn verdanke, haben die Jahre aus meinem Gemüthe nicht verwischt. Was ich

<sup>1</sup> See MCISAAC, P.M; MUELLER G. (Eds.) **Exhibiting the German Past: Museums, Film, and Musealization**, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015, in particular WARD, S., The “Museal Gaze” and “Civic Seeing”: City, Film, and Museum in Wim Wenders’s *Der Himmel über Berlin*, p. 21–41.

<sup>2</sup> One of the countries furthest ahead in the musealization process was undoubtedly Italy, as what has been considered by some scholars to be the first public museum of the modern age is precisely the Capitoline Museum, founded in 1471 in Rome following Pope Sixtus IV’s gift of some pagan bronze statues to the Roman people, cf. CHRIS-TILLIN, E.; GRECO C. **Le memorie del futuro: musei e ricerca**, Torino: Einaudi 2021, p. 39. For an overview, see BAIRATI E. Alle origini del museo moderno: l’eredità della Rivoluzione nella crescita dei grandi musei europei dell’Ottocento, in: **Ideologie e patrimonio storico-culturale nell’età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica. A proposito del trattato di Tolentino**, Roma: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato- Archivi di Stato 2000, pp.165–189. See also PAUL, C. **The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-century Europe**, Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> POMIAN, K. **Le musée, une histoire mondiale II. L’ancrage européen, 1789–1850**, chapters XII–XIX, Paris: Gallimard 2021.

<sup>4</sup> For further contextualization I refer to ZIMMER, J., “Nachrichten über Aloys Hirt und Bibliographie seiner gedruckten Schriften”, in: **Jb. der Berliner Museen**, N. F. 41 (1999), pp. 133–194; See also FENDT, A.; SEDLARZ-RIEDINGER C.; ZIMMER J. **Aloys Hirt in Berlin: Kulturmanagement im frühen 19. Jahrhundert**, Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 2014.

vermochte | habe auch ich zu leisten mich bemüht, und die Studien sind es, die meinen Geist und Körper noch emporhalten.<sup>5</sup>

These few lines allow us to travel back in time to 1786, when the young Hirt, not yet 30 years old, met Goethe in Rome, which was then the “Treffpunkt der Kulturen” and the “Umschlagplatz” (“transshipment center”) of European knowledge about art and all related aesthetic-artistic practices<sup>6</sup>.

As has often been reiterated<sup>7</sup>, the history of Berlin History of Art is deeply linked to the city of Rome, and more specifically to the encounter there between Aloys Hirt and Karl Philipp Moritz in 1786, which flowed first and foremost into the founding of the art-literary journal *Italien und Deutschland*, which they directed, beginning in 1789.

In such “Hauptstadt der Welt” Hirt arrived in 1782, when he was only 23 years old, and here earned his living in Rome as one of the most desired “Cicerones,” structuring his guided tours among collections, palaces, and ancient ruins in an increasingly professional and standardized manner according to a “Kursus” with a very precise calendar, for a monthly period of 5 hours of visits per day<sup>8</sup>. In addition, Hirt offered himself as a consultant to German tourists interested in purchasing antiquities. Among them were many famous people<sup>9</sup>, among whom the most famous was Goethe himself who, in turn, recommended him to Herder as an “Antiquar” and expert guide in the eternal city. This meeting remained well imprinted in the memory of the Olympian who, many years later in a letter to Hirt dated May 24, 1830, wrote:

Ich erinnere mich deutlichst der ersten Augenblicke, da ich, ein frischer Ankömmling in Rom, Sie dort schon als Eingeweihten fand, durch Sie geführt, der unschätzbaren Herrlichkeiten zuerst gewahr wurde.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> HIRT, A.L. **Briefwechsel und Amtliche Schriften**. Herausgegeben von der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Bearbeitet von Uta Motschmann. 2014–2021. <https://alloys-hirt.bbaw.de/index.xql> “It is now 43 years since I first walked with you among the monuments of Rome. I am always pleased to see the loyal devotion with which the Muses have accompanied you through life to this day (long may it continue!). The years have not erased from my mind what I owe to your company at that time and later to your kind encouragement on the path I took at that time. What I was able to achieve I have also endeavored to do, and it is my studies that still keep my mind and body up” [my translation].

<sup>6</sup> Einleitung in: FENDT; SEDLARZ; ZIMMER, **Aloys Hirt in Berlin**, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> SEDLARZ, C. Morgenröte der Berliner Kunstgeschichte. Aloys Hirt an der Berliner Akademie der Künste und seine Zusammenarbeit mit Karl Philipp Moritz in: **Aloys Hirt in Berlin: Kulturmanagement im frühen 19. Jahrhundert**, pp. 141–178; here p. 144.

<sup>8</sup> See MEYER S. A. „Briefe aus Rom“. Le notizie sulla produzione artistica romana tra fine Settecento e inizio Ottocento nelle riviste tedesche, in: CANTARUTTI, G.; FERRARI S. **Paesaggi europei del Neoclassicismo**. Bologna: Il Mulino 2007, p. 251.

<sup>9</sup> Including e.g. Wilhelmine Countess of Lichtenau and Duchess Anna Amalia of Weimar.

<sup>10</sup> HIRT, A. L. **Briefwechsel und Amtliche Schriften**. Herausgegeben von der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Bearbeitet von Uta Motschmann. 2014–2021. <https://alloys-hirt.bbaw.de/index.xql>



Fig. 1: *Goethe in seinem römischen Freundeskreis*  
owned by the Goethe Museum Düsseldorf/Anton and Katharina Kippenberg Foundation

As proof of the lively Roman atmosphere that Hirt and Goethe shared, we are left with a drawing by the painter Johann Friedrich Bury (1763–1823) titled *Goethe in seinem römischen Freundeskreis* (1787), which also immortalizes a group of German intellectuals and artists, including Karl Philipp Moritz and Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, engaged in open-air artistic activities, including Bury’s execution of a portrait of Goethe, who is attended in curiosity by his Cicero Hirt, easily recognized by his broad hat.

In Rome, which was then a “plural” city<sup>11</sup>, Hirt thus achieved an extraordinary “Praxiswissen” in close contact with Italian and European artists, for whom from 1786 he held a weekly “Kolleg” on the history<sup>12</sup>. Rome was in fact a proper “Kunstmropole,” and for many young European artists the Roman sojourn was a guarantee of future success at home<sup>13</sup>. As he writes about himself in his mature *Kunstabemerkungen* (1830), he had little prior knowledge but also little prejudice and feared no authority<sup>14</sup>. He demonstrated this through his “Kunstmteilungen” in the *Teutschen Merkur*, where *inter alia* he considered Jacques-Louis David’s *The Oath of Horatii* (1784) superior to *The Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple* in Raphael’s Room of Heliodorus. With his “Kunstkritiken” from Rome, Hirt thus contributed to forming the taste of the German public who read his impassioned “Kunstmbriefen” with which he hoped to shape also a political consciousness and awareness of the importance of “Entstehung einer deutschen Kunstmation”<sup>15</sup>.

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“I clearly remember the first moments when I, a fresh arrival in Rome, found you there already as an initiate, guided by you, first became aware of the inestimable glories [my translation].”

<sup>11</sup> FOSI, I. *The Plural City: Urban Spaces and Foreign Communities*, in: **A Companion to Early Modern Rome, 1492–1692**. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> MÜLLER A., «Docendo discimus»...«durch das Lehren lernen wir». Aloys Hirts Jahre als Cicerone in Rom, in: SEDLARZ C.; JOHANNSEN, R.H. (Eds.), **Aloys Hirt. Archäologe, Historiker, Kunstmkenner**, Hannover-Laatzten 2004, pp. 15–68.

<sup>13</sup> VOGT M. **Von Kunstmworten und -Werten: Die Entstehung der Deutschen Kunstmkritik in Periodika der Aufklärung**. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010, p. 297.

<sup>14</sup> HIRT, A. **Kunstmabemerkungen auf einer Reise über Wittenberg und Meissen nach Dresden und Prag**. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1830. p. 195 ss.

<sup>15</sup> VOGT, **Von Kunstmworten und -Werten**, p. 329.

After 15 years in the Eternal City, in September 1796 Hirt returned to Germany and became Ordinary Member of the *Akademie der Wissenschaften und Künste* and Professor of Fine Arts “für alle theoretischen Teile der schönen Künste.” The year 1796 is thus the year of the great caesura in the life and career of Hirt, who suddenly went from being an independent Cicero to a salaried court official, assuming the role of *Vermittler*, that is, cultural mediator between Italy and Germany, and especially between Rome and Berlin. The two cities in the late 18th century differed substantially, especially for an art lover like Hirt. The Prussian metropolis was indeed a vibrant but backward city; it had a lively but not international “Kulturszene,” and the public was slowly becoming accustomed to seeing “Kunstsachen”, but refined criticism could not be expected (so he writes in the review *Über die Berliner Kunstaussstellung im Jahre 1798*<sup>16</sup>). As soon as he arrived in the Prussian capital, Hirt began attending the *Berliner-Zirkeln*, including the “Mittwochsgesellschaft”<sup>17</sup>, a literary society founded in 1796 by Ignaz Aurelius Feßler, which was also open to women, in which lectures of various sorts (of historical, philosophical, and artistic content) were held, and where, among other things, he had the pleasure of listening to the reading of works by Goethe (specifically *Hermann und Dorothea*), as evidenced by the letter written from Berlin, dated December 2, 1797<sup>18</sup>.

However, between Hirt and Goethe, unlike with Hegel, a true friendship never developed, as the title of Bury’s drawing (Fig. 1) would instead suggest, but rather an enduring relationship of esteem, albeit in the diversity of opinions that Goethe on several occasions expressed,<sup>19</sup> more or less publicly.

<sup>16</sup> In: *Der Neue Teutsche Merkur vom Jahre 1798*, vol. 3, pp. 279–296.

<sup>17</sup> MOTSCHMANN, U. Aloys Hirt an der Akademie der Wissenschaften und als Mitglied in Berliner Vereinen, in: **Aloys Hirt in Berlin: Kulturmanagement im frühen 19. Jahrhundert**, p. 198.

<sup>18</sup> “Wie unsterblich Sie sich auf’s neue in den Berliner-Zirkeln gemacht haben, kann Ihnen als Beyspiel sein, daß vorigen Mittwoch in unserer Gesellschaft Herman u. Dorothea von Anfang bis zu Ende von einem sehr guten Leser — David Friedländer vorgelesen ward: und daß den Freytag vorher in der andern Gesellschaft — wovon ich gleichfalls Mitglied bin — eine sehr detaillirte Auseinandersetzung dieses Gedichtes statt hatte; und künftigen Freytag erwarten wir eine zweyte. Die erste machte Herr Bothe, ein junger Mann, der einiges im satyrischen Fache bekannt ist; und die zweyte will uns Candidat Süvern geben”. (“How immortal you have made yourself again in the Berlin circles may be seen from the circumstance that last Wednesday in our society Herman and Dorothea was read from beginning to end by a very good reader—David Friedländer: and that the Friday before in the other society—of which I am also a member—a very detailed dissection of this poem took place; and next Friday we expect a second. The first was done by Mr. Bothe, a young man who is well renowned in the satirical field; and the second will be given to us by Candidate Süvern” [my translation].)

<sup>19</sup> One thinks first of all of the 1799 essay *Der Sammler und die Seinigen* (“The collector and his circle”), or of this epistolary exchange with Meyer: “Hirts Kunstbemerkungen welche Sie mir gestern übersendet, habe ich durchgelesen und bin grösstentheils damit zufrieden. Nur hätte er seine schlechte Meinung von der Familie der Niobe und die absurde Verunglimpfung der Venus von Tizian zu Dresden zurückhalten oder wenigstens nicht abdrucken lassen sollen” (I read through Hirt’s remarks on art, which you sent me yesterday, and am largely satisfied with them. However, he should have withheld his bad opinion of Niobe’s family and the absurd denigration of Titian’s Venus in Dresden, or at least not had them published”, [my translation]); (GSA Weimar, *Eingegangene Briefe 1830*, p. 163). Goethe agrees with this opinion in his reply letter of May 29, 1830: “Es war mir

Since 1797, Hirt thus played a key role in Prussian cultural and artistic policy at a time of great international transformation, not least as a result of Napoleon's confiscations and plundering for the Treaty of Tolentino (of February 19, 1797) imposed by Napoleon on Pius VI, which saw Italy lose its primacy as a leading nation in the arts<sup>20</sup>. Such tumultuous geopolitical upheavals urged a rethinking of world balances, in which Germany, too, could find its place to finally move closer to the "model nations" of international artistic taste, as Hirt hoped<sup>21</sup>.

If Rome was thus at the end of the eighteenth century in a waning phase of its cultural-historical existence, Berlin could instead aspire to become a rising star in the international artistic constellation, at least so Hirt wished. Shortly after his arrival, therefore, he immediately delivered several lectures in the *Akademie der Wissenschaften*, including one on the Laocoon<sup>22</sup>; however, the contribution that had the greatest resonance, especially for the future founding of a museum institution in Berlin (i.e., the present *Altes Museum*), was undoubtedly the Lecture of September 25, 1797, delivered during an "öffentliche Sitzung der Kunstakademie" on the occasion of the birthday of King Friedrich Wilhelm II. von Preußen (1744-1797)<sup>23</sup>, in which Hirt—according to Pomian's effective summary—"pointed out that in Vienna, Dresden and even in the smaller capitals of princely states, there had been galleries of paintings, collections of antiquities and art cabinets for years, and that only the Prussian capital lacked them. He therefore proposed to bring together all the antiquities belonging to the king in a museum and all his paintings in a gallery, placing them both in a new building to be built in Berlin as soon as possible."<sup>24</sup>

The day after the influential Lecture, Hirt wrote excitedly to Böttiger:

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sehr angenehm was Sie von Hirts Werke sagten; gerade diese beiden Äußerungen waren mir gleichfalls auffallend, wenn ich mich an dem Übrigen erfreuen und belehren konnte. Eine solche Recapitulation ist immer unterhaltend und aufregend" ("I was very pleased with what you said about Hirt's works; these two statements in particular were equally striking to me when I was able to enjoy and learn from the rest. Such a recapitulation is always entertaining and exciting" [my translation]); (WA, IV, Bd. 47, Nr. 69, p. 79).

<sup>20</sup> See CATALANO G. *Musei invisibili, Idea e forma della collezione nell'opera di Goethe*. Roma: Artemide, 2007, pp. 150–166.

<sup>21</sup> HIRT, A.L. "Über den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preußischen Hauses. Eine Vorlesung, gehalten bei der öffentlichen Sitzung der Akademie der schönen Künste und mechanischen Wissenschaften, den 25. Sept. 1797." *Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks*, 2 (1797), pp. 499–524, here p. 500 and 502.

<sup>22</sup> See MOTSCHMANN. Aloys Hirt an der Akademie der Wissenschaften und als Mitglied in Berliner Vereinen, in: *Aloys Hirt in Berlin: Kulturmanagement im frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, p. 182.

<sup>23</sup> HIRT, "Über den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preußischen Hauses".

<sup>24</sup> My translation. "Hirt notait qu'à Vienne, à Dresde et même dans de plus petites capitales princières il y avait depuis des années des galeries de tableaux, des collections d'antiquités et des cabinets d'art; seule en était dépourvue la capitale de la Prusse. Et il proposait de réunir toutes les antiques appartenant au roi dans un musée et tous ses tableaux dans une galerie logés l'un et l'autre dans un bâtiment construit tout exprès à Berlin." POMIAN, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale II. L'ancrage européen, 1789–1850*, p. 365

Gestern als am Geburtstage unseres Königes hatten wir öffentliche Versammlung in der Akademie der Künste. Es wurden mehrere Reden verlesen. [...] 5 tens las ich über den königlichen Kunstschatz, und über die Vereinigung desselben in ein Museum, und eine Gallerie — und zwar in Berlin selbst (dieser Aufsatz erregte allgemeine sensation). [...]. Die Sitzung dauerte von 10. bis 1. Uhr. unter einem großen Gedränge von Menschen. [...] Eben werde ich zum Könige gerufen, mit dem Befehl meine Zeichnungen vom Monumente mitzubringen, und auch meine gestrige Rede. es ist acht Uhr. um neun Uhr muß ich auf dem Schloße seyn. Nachher mehr.

Es ist halb eilfe: ich bin zurück. Der König erinnerte sich gar nicht, mein Projekt vorher gesehen zu haben: er war allein mit der Gräfin von Lichtenau. Ich mußte mich sezen, alles erklären, und der König wird sogleich an Minister schreiben, daß mein Projekt, so wie ich die weitere angabe treffen werde, an dem Plaze, den ich wählte, ausgeführt werde. Soviel mündlich. Es ist zum Erstaunen, wie der Mann in den Sinn des Ganzen eingriff — ich konnte gerade so mit ihm sprechen, als wenn ich es Ihnen vorlegte — so unbefangen, natürlich — und so leicht ward alles begriffen [...]. Ich schreibe confus, weil die Überraschung mein Blut etwas zu sehr in Wallung gesetzt hat.<sup>25</sup>

The sensational conference in which he advocated the establishing of a museum in Berlin thus had great resonance because of the pioneering role assumed by Hirt, who stood out as an energetic trailblazer, who worked to ensure that an art market would develop and that art education in Berlin's "Zeichnungsschulen" would be enhanced. Above all, however, he intended to point his interlocutors to new spaces that evidently led into the future, or at least they should have. More specifically, he was suggesting that what was fragmented in previous spaces, understood as self-celebrating devices of power, be brought together into a single "sober" artistic space.

In fact, Hirt aimed to: a) centralize what was scattered and dispersed<sup>26</sup>; b) enhance the (poorly) exhibited works of art in the castles of Potsdam, Berlin and Charlottenburg<sup>27</sup>; c) in-

<sup>25</sup> HIRT, A.L. **Briefwechsel und Amtliche Schriften**. Herausgegeben von der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Bearbeitet von Uta Motschmann. 2014–2021. <https://alloys-hirt.bbaw.de/index.xql> "Yesterday, on our King's birthday, we had a public meeting at the Academy of Arts. Several speeches were read out. [...] I read about the royal Kunstschatz, and about the unification of the same into a museum and a gallery—in Berlin itself (this speech caused a general sensation). [...]. The meeting lasted from 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. with a large crowd of people. [...] I have just been summoned to the King, with orders to bring my drawings of the monument, and also my speech of yesterday. it is eight o'clock. at nine o'clock I must be at the palace. More later.

It is half past eleven: I am back. The King did not remember having seen my project before: he was alone with the Countess of Lichtenau. I had to sit down, explain everything, and the King will immediately write to the Ministers that my project, as I will further specify, will be carried out in the place I have chosen. So much orally. It is astonishing how the man grasped the meaning of the whole thing—I could speak to him just as if I were presenting it to you—so impartially, naturally—and everything was so easily understood [...]. I am writing confusingly because the surprise made my blood boil a little too much." [my translation].

<sup>26</sup> HIRT, "Über den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preußischen Hauses", p. 508.

<sup>27</sup> HIRT, "Über den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preußischen Hauses", p. 509–510–511.

crease Prussian art tourism, which was currently bewildered by incomplete and meager catalogs<sup>28</sup>; d) catalog items that had not been cataloged; e) correct false attributions; and f) contextualize works of art against a historical background. This was evidently an ambitious program with which Hirt first and foremost wanted to bring “order” to eighteenth-century spaces, such as the Royal Collection of Ancient Gems and Coins or the *Antikenkabinett* in Berlin, which were not easily accessible and were somewhat dispersed for visitors and art lovers.

The higher intent, however, was to train and solicit the *Kunstsinn* by first and foremost displaying works that exhibited the ideal of “classic,” but also much more. As Hirt argues:

Zwar gehört in eine Gemäldesammlung nicht blos das, was in einem höhern Sinn den Namen des klassischen verdient, sondern sie muss auch einen anderen Gesichtspunkt, der nicht weniger wichtig ist, naemlich die Kunstgeschichte, darstellen.<sup>29</sup>

In doing so, he was letting out that interest in the characteristic of which he was to be the major theorist and which he would first discuss in the *Versuch über das Kunstschöne* of 1797, appreciated and cited a few decades later by Hegel himself (GW 28.3: 919).

The ideal institutional place for *Bildung* was thus the museum, understood as a place for the transmission of knowledge, where to orient the user in the “Labyrinth der Kunstgeschichte”<sup>30</sup> by exhibiting works according to a strictly historical succession, even if resorting to the display of copies.

When the following year, Hirt drafted the document *Ueber die Einrichtung eines Königlichen Museum der Antiken und einer Königl. Gemäldegallerie*<sup>31</sup> and identified several potential “spaces” to house the museum of the future, easily accessible but also isolated from other buildings to ensure brightness and security, including the *Gendarmenmarkt* and the *Lustgarten*, but primarily the old Academy. From his enthusiastic reflections he revealed that, by intending to “musealize the Academy,” he was in truth offering a museum paradigm that, within a few decades, would prove obsolete and indigestible to his contemporaries who were mostly advocates of the museum institution as a place of aesthetic enjoyment<sup>32</sup>. History—after nearly

<sup>28</sup> HIRT, “Über den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preußischen Hauses”, p. 512.

<sup>29</sup> HIRT, “Über den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preußischen Hauses”, p. 514. “It is certainly true that a collection of paintings should not only include what deserves to be called classical in a higher sense, but it must also represent another aspect that is no less important, namely the history of art [my translation].”

<sup>30</sup> HIRT, “Über den Kunstschatz des Königlich-Preußischen Hauses”, p. 515.

<sup>31</sup> HIRT, A. Über die Einrichtung eines Königlichen Museums der Antiken und einer Königlichen Gemäldegallerie. In: Seidel, Paul: Zur Vorgeschichte der Berliner Museen: der erste Plan von 1797. In: **Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen**, 49 (1928), Beiheft 1929, pp. 55–64.

<sup>32</sup> See POMIAN, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale II. L’ancrage européen, 1789-1850*, p. 365.

two decades of stagnation in the museum project due to complex issues of international politics—did not agree with Hirt, who, by understanding the museum as an exclusively pedagogical-didactic space of taste/education, proved to be in truth a blind forerunner, awkwardly poised between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## 2. Hegel, or the “silent visionary”

One may inquire at this point: What about Hegel? What place did the philosopher hold in such a complex aesthetic-museal constellation? What contribution did he make to the 19th century, understood as the golden century of museums and musealization or, more generally, as the “museum age” (“l’âge des musées” according to Germain Bazin<sup>33</sup>)? Recalling Gombrich’s overused slogan of Hegel as “father of art history”, or the many acknowledgments that have been made of Hegelian resonances on later art-historical narratives<sup>34</sup>, one would expect a substantial contribution. On the other hand, a detail that is not merely biographical should be added; namely that for Hegel, Hirt was not only an authority, but also a very dear friend. Indeed, as Kaube writes, among Hegel’s few true friends in Berlin should be mentioned, in addition to the philologist and Sanskritist Bopp, the classical archaeologist Aloys Hirt<sup>35</sup>. Hegel repeatedly recognizes his authority and mentions him in all Berlin courses on Aesthetics<sup>36</sup>; in 1826 for example he calls him a learned connoisseur of art (*gelehrte Kunstkenner*)<sup>37</sup>. There can be no doubt, therefore, that Hegel was well acquainted with Hirt’s museum project and his pedagogical conception of the museum. How much he agreed with it, however, remains to be clarified.

Let us now consider in more detail to what degree Hegel received aesthetic suggestions that are traceable to the reflections of the *Altertumswissenschaftler* Aloys Hirt. In the Roman phase (1782–1796), Hirt published in Italian the essay *Osservazioni istorico-architettoniche sopra il Panteon* (Rome, Pagliarini, 1791), which forms the theoretical basis of the later version, revised in German and published in 1807, that subsequently aroused Hegel’s attention. In fact, among Hegel’s “excerpts” are, in addition to 1821 annotations taken from *Ueber die Bildung der aegyptischen Gottheiten* and the first volume of the work *Die Geschichte der Baukunst bei*

<sup>33</sup> BAZIN, G. *Les temps des musées*, Bruxelles: Desoer 1967.

<sup>34</sup> As well underlined by Squire: “Many of our most deep-set metanarratives about classical art—its stylistic forms, motivations and execution—derive from Hegel”. M. SQUIRE, *Unser Knie beugen wir doch nicht mehr? Hegel, classical Art and the reformation of Art History*, in: P. Kottman, M. Squire (Eds.), *The Art of Hegel’s Aesthetics. Hegelian Philosophy and the Perspectives of Art History*. Munich: Fink, 2018, pp. 125–157, here p. 131.

<sup>35</sup> KAUBE, J. *Hegelswelt*, Berlin: Rowohlt, 2020, p. 483.

<sup>36</sup> GW 28.1, p. 145; GW 28.1, p. 447; GW 28.2, p. 773; GW 28.3, pp. 919 and 1086.

<sup>37</sup> GW 28.2, p. 773.

*den Alten* (published in three volumes by the Berlin publisher Reimer between 1821 and 1827) on the function of sphinxes in Egyptian architecture<sup>38</sup>, more can be found, dating back to 1828, that is taken from Hirt's own essay published a couple of decades earlier on the Pantheon<sup>39</sup>. The dates of the Hegelian excerpts (1821 and 1828) suggest that they were made to enrich through learned references the four Berlin Aesthetics courses (taught from the winter semester of 1820–21 to the winter semester of 1828–29), and that they served as inspiration for Hegel to better articulate his treatment, as is the case in the last Aesthetics course of 1828/29, where Hegel for the first time inserts a section on Roman architecture. Thus Hegel, thanks to Hirt's studies, can discuss the structure of the Pantheon with his listeners, despite having never seen the most important monument in the Eternal City in person:

In ägyptischer Baukunst finden wir keine Wölbung, ungeachtet es die Ägypter so weit in der Baukunst gebracht haben. Eine Menge von Säulen stützten eine Decke. Unter den griechischen Überresten findet man Bogen nur in der späteren Zeit. Hirt, der über die Baukunst das bedeutendste Werk geschrieben, sagt, wo die Kunst des Wölbens angebracht ist, war bei den Römern, bei denen es schon alt gewesen zu sein scheint, in den Katakomben oder Kloaken. Man schreibt die Erfindung einem Democrit, der der Philosoph gewesen sei, zu. Er beschäftigt sich mit Naturgegenständen. In dieser Form ist das Pantheon von Agrippa unter Augustus gebaut, wo Mars, Venus (auf Romulus, Aeneas hindeutend) Caesar, Augustus hinkommen sollten in die Nischen. Es hat eine Halbkugel als Decke. Im Technischen ist zu bemerken, daß die Wölbung von Holz gemacht wurde, und daß dieses mit Mörtel bedeckt ist, mit Kalk und leichten vulkanischen Steinen. Man ließ die Mischung verhärten und nahm das Holz fort. Die Masse ist so fest, daß die dauerhafteste Wölbung entstanden ist. Die römische Baukunst zeigt sich so durch seine Wölbung aus.<sup>40</sup>

Hegel refers to Hirt and his works on several occasions, not only in the field of architecture, for example in 1828–29, when he mentions him as the author of aesthetic reflections on the characteristic set forth in the essay *Versuch über das Kunstschöne*, which was published in *Die Horen* in 1797:

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<sup>38</sup> GW 22, p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> GW 22, pp. 157–158.

<sup>40</sup> GW 28.3, p. 1089. “We find no vaulting in Egyptian architecture, despite the Egyptians’ advancement in architecture. A multitude of columns supported a ceiling. Among the Greek remains, arches are found only in later periods. Hirt, who wrote the most important work on architecture, says that the art of vaulting can be found among the Romans, where it seems to have been ancient, in the catacombs or sewers. The invention is attributed to Democritus, who was supposedly a philosopher. He studied natural objects. The Pantheon of Agrippa was built in this form under Augustus, where Mars, Venus (referring to Romulus and Aeneas), Caesar, and Augustus were to be placed in the niches. It has a hemisphere as a ceiling. Technically, it should be noted that the vaulting was made of wood and covered with mortar, lime, and light volcanic stones. The mixture was allowed to harden, and the wood was removed. The mass was so solid that the most durable arch was created. Roman architecture is thus characterized by its arches” [my translation].

jene bestimmte Individualität wodurch Formen, Ausdruck, Lokalfarbe, Licht und Schatten sich unterscheiden, wie der vorgelegte Gegenstand es verlangt, sagt er. Das ist interessant, weil Hirt es gesehn und Scharfsinn und Urtheil hat. Das Wesen des Schönen ist der Zweck der Kunst. Enthalten ist im Charakteristischen ein Inhalt, der als geschichtliche Begebenheit oder individueller Charakter enthalten sein kann und wie ein solcher darzustellen ist. Darauf geht die Charakteristik, daß alles besondre diene, solchen Inhalt auszusprechen, daß alles ein Glied sei in beziehung des Inhalts.<sup>41</sup>

By introducing the notion of the characteristic, Hirt had formulated a notion with latent anticlassical potential, which nevertheless remained his most innovative and important theoretical achievement, despite the fact that it did not entirely encounter the sensibilities of the theorists of the time, such as, for example, Johann Heinrich Meyer (1760–1832), who in the *Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Griechen* (1824) criticizes it as a notion degenerating toward caricature and the ugly. For such an aesthetic notion to arouse Hegel’s interest<sup>42</sup> is a clear indication of that receptivity to the non-beautiful<sup>43</sup> that marks the Hegelian Philosophy of Art in Berlin, beyond the vulgate of the classicist Hegel, crystallized in the *Aesthetics*, edited posthumously (1835–38; 1842) by his pupil and art historian Heinrich Gustav Hotho. It is peculiar, however, that Hegel never cites his esteemed friend Hirt for his museological contribution, which had also been his most ambitious and titanic effort. Such silence on Hegel’s part could be hastily justified by arguing that the philosopher—having left us no theoretical essay explicitly devoted to the museum and musealization—was evidently not at all interested in that process, which, however, as we have recalled, is not just one aesthetic phenomenon among many, but perhaps the one most characteristic of his dissonant age. On the other hand, as Otto Pöggeler notes with a fine touch, it cannot be forgotten that since 1824 Hegel had been urged to compare—both by daily visual and acoustic stimuli—the construction of the museum not far

<sup>41</sup> GW 28.3, p. 920–921: “that certain individuality by which forms, expression, local color, light and shadow are differentiated as required by the object presented, he says. This is interesting because Hirt has seen it and has acumen and judgment. The essence of beauty is the purpose of art. Inherent in the characteristic is a content that can be contained as a historical event or individual character and how such a character is to be portrayed. Characteristics are based on the idea that everything in particular serves to express such content, that everything is a link in relation to the content” [my translation].

<sup>42</sup> DONOUGH, M. Hegel’s “characteristic” (die Charakteristik) in 1828–29, in: F. Iannelli, A.P. Olivier, K. Vieweg (Eds.), *Rethinking Hegel’s last Lectures on Aesthetics in and for the XXI century*, *Studi di Estetica*, XLVIII, IV, 1/2020, pp. 83–102.

<sup>43</sup> On this let me refer to IANNELLI, F. *Das Siegel der Moderne. Hegels Bestimmung des Hässlichen in den Vorlesungen zur Ästhetik und die Rezeption bei den Hegelianern*, München: Fink, 2007.

from his home and the University, and that he had even been working to ensure that the collection of the Boisserée brothers, to whom he had been linked since the Nuremberg period, would land in Berlin<sup>44</sup>.

Hegel's silence should therefore not be interpreted as mere indifference, nor even as mere disappointment, because the museum project envisaged by Hirt had not been translated into reality; it is perhaps the silence of one who, imagining the "Nevermuseum" that had yet to exist, was tacitly helping to shape—through a complex intangible construction in the galleries that run through his Berlin *Vorlesungen*, what Dilly called, several decades ago, "das imaginäre Museum Hegels"<sup>45</sup> (the Hegelian imaginary museum) that is nevertheless understood here as an aesthetic-spiritual construction, in which every "Kunstform" and every art finds display, even the minor or imperfect ones, as well as every work of art from the most microscopic (such as Michelangelo's *Siegelring*)<sup>46</sup> to the most colossal as in the case of the Sphinxes<sup>47</sup>, of some sculptures of Phidias<sup>48</sup>, of Gothic<sup>49</sup> and Indian architecture<sup>50</sup>.

On closer inspection, however, we note that the term museum is not entirely absent from the Hegelian theoretical world, although it constitutes in the Berlin Lectures on Aesthetics a hapax<sup>51</sup> (GW 28:2 796, in which the philosopher speaks in the sculpture section of ancient idols). On the other hand, there is no shortage of connections and intersections between the Berlin *Ästhetikvorlesungen*, understood as an imposing Hegelian imaginary museum, and the history of Berlin's nascent museology and art history. Indeed, the philosopher seems to be the gray eminence<sup>52</sup> in the process of the emergence of the public museum and for the establishment of the European museum institution; in particular of the *Altes Museum* in Berlin, which was to be opened on August 3, 1830 after a violent *Museumsstreit* of opinion, which led to the resig-

<sup>44</sup> PÖGGELER, O. Hegel und der Berliner Museumsstreit, in: **Kunst als Kulturgut**, vol. III, Gethmann-Siefert, A.; Collenberg-Plotnikov, B.; Weisser-Lohmann, E. (Eds.), **Musealisierung und Reflexion**, München: Fink, 2011, pp. 99–117, here pp. 102–103.

<sup>45</sup> DILLY, H. Hegel und Schinkel, in: Gethmann-Siefert, A.; Pöggeler, O. (Eds.), **Welt und Wirkung von Hegels Ästhetik**. Bonn: Bouvier, 1986, pp. 103–16, here p. 104.

<sup>46</sup> GW 28. 1, p.151.

<sup>47</sup> GW 28.2, 674 and 779.

<sup>48</sup> GW 28.3, p. 1106.

<sup>49</sup> GW 28.2, p. 790.

<sup>50</sup> GW 28.3, p. 1018.

<sup>51</sup>Of course some rare use of the term is found in the epistolary, when Hegel refers more concretely to the European museums he visited, including first and foremost the Louvre, see Hegel, G.W.F, **The Letters**, tr. by C. Butler, C. Seiler, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 653–654.

<sup>52</sup> VIEWEG, K. **Hegel. Der Philosoph der Freiheit**, Munich: Beck 2019, p. 555.

nation of his friend Aloys Hirt and the end of his public influence on Prussian and Berlin cultural policy, although he remained artistic adviser to the king<sup>53</sup>. However, there is no doubt that despite the tensions and criticism<sup>54</sup> it was a “Sternstunde” for the culture of the time. In an innovative choice, the exhibited works were grouped by schools; that is, the display of paintings followed historical criteria<sup>55</sup>. As Otto Pöggeler writes, not without emphasis:

Berlin musste von den anderen Hauptstädten Europas lernen, doch konnte Stadt auch Neues einbringen — eben die geschichtliche Betrachtung der Kunst im Ganzen!<sup>56</sup>

Certainly Hegel appreciated (at least in part) this exhibition choice<sup>57</sup>, although the layout was followed another criterion so much desired by Wilhelm von Humboldt, as director of the second *Museumskommission*, namely the principle of “Genuss des Schönen”<sup>58</sup>. Most likely, however, it was precisely because of his friendship with Hirt—who had headed the *Museumskommission* until his stormy resignation in April 1829—that he did not take a public stance, since the original conception of the museum as a place for the education and *Bildung* of the public advocated by Hirt was totally overcome by the front of his opponents (Waagen, Schinkel, Humboldt and von Ruhmor)<sup>59</sup>.

Hegel in fact, while deciding not to express himself publicly, was well acquainted with all the main actors involved in the so-called “Museumstreit”. Nevertheless, he seemed to sympathize—at least as far as the arrangement of the pictorial works was concerned—with his friend Hirt himself, as a passage in the last Berlin course on the philosophy of art of 1828–29 seems to suggest:

Die Kunst der Malerei hat eine unendliche Mannigfaltigkeit, weßhalb man die Gemälde selbst betrachten muß, um ihre Besonderheiten vor sich zu haben.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. ZIMMER, J. “Nachrichten über Aloys Hirt und Bibliographie seiner gedruckten Schriften”, in: **Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen**, (1999), pp. 133–194, here p. 150.

<sup>54</sup> For more details see POMIAN, Le musée, une histoire mondiale II. L’ancrage européen, 1789-1850, pp. 382–384.

<sup>55</sup> HAMLIN, C. Philosophie der Kunst, Kunstmuseum, Kunstwissenschaft: Die Stadt Berlin um 1830 und danach, in: **Kunst als Kulturgut**, Bd. III, **Musealisierung und Reflexion**, pp. 119–140, here p. 123, cf. also p. 127.

<sup>56</sup> O. PÖGgeler, Hegel und der Berliner Museumsstreit, p. 105. “Berlin had to learn from the other European capitals, but the city was also able to bring in something new — the historical view of art as a whole!”

<sup>57</sup> PÖGgeler, O. Hegel und der Berliner Museumsstreit, p. 112. Dilly, e.g., points out that the historical-chronological criterion was not rigorously and consistently applied, given the absence of pictorial works prior to 1400 (DILLY, H. “Hegel und Schinkel”, p. 111), as well as considering the choice to exhibit Egyptian art separately within Schloss Monbijou, which was considered extraneous to the later historical-artistic development. (DILLY, H. “Hegel und Schinkel”, p. 114).

<sup>58</sup> VOGTHERR., C.M. “Zwischen Norm und Kunstgeschichte. Wilhelm von Humboldts Denkschrift von 1829 zur Hängung in der Berliner Gemäldegalerie.” **Jahrbuch Der Berliner Museen**, 34 (1992): pp. 53–64, here p. 61.

<sup>59</sup> See WEGNER, R. Der Streit um die Präsentation der Bildenden Kunst. Aloys Hirt und Gustav Friedrich Waagen, in *Kunst als Kulturgut*, vol. III, **Musealisierung und Reflexion**, pp. 81–82.

Der Beschreibungen wird man bald müde. Sie lassen die Vorstellung unbestimmt. Die geschichtliche Behandlung ist deßhalb das beste für die Zeit, der sie angehört. Die Aufstellung einer geschichtlichen Sammlung wird unschätzbar sein; dann wird man der Malerei nachgehen können, wie die Malerei mit dem Steifen, Kunstlosen angefangen; wie die Charakteristik des Individuums, das Schöne dargestellt zu werden später erfolgte.<sup>60</sup>

The question then arises: What is Hegel referring to here? To the pictorial gallery that was to be set up shortly thereafter in 1830 (in which the historical-chronological criterion, as we have seen, was not the only one), or to the one that Hirt would have wanted to realize? Since this is a reflection from February 1829, i.e., dating from two months before Hirt's resignation, it seems to be an important testimony to Hegelian agreement with the historical-chronological criterion advocated by Hirt, suggesting an extraneousness toward the other aesthetic principles that had inspired both the scenographic construction (by Karl Friedrich Schinkel<sup>61</sup>) and the museum setting. On the other hand, in the *Aesthetics*, edited posthumously by H. G. Hotho after the master's sudden death, this reflection takes on an entirely different meaning, since the editor arbitrarily added an explicit reference to the *Altes Museum* inaugurated in 1830, which finds no counterpart during 1828–29, and thus suggests an explicit endorsement by Hegel toward the “winners” of the *Museumstreit*<sup>62</sup> that was not there<sup>63</sup>.

The doubt arises, however, that Hegel's silence, rather than being due solely to being focused on the subterranean construction of the imaginary museum that the philosopher helped to outline in his lectures, was also due to the fact that Hegel had another idea of “museum” in mind, one that did not quite coincide with Hirt's. This is what another curious passage from the 1826 course seems to enshrine:

Wenn Hegel Praesident einer Akademie waere, monumenta Nationum.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> GW 28.3, p. 1117: “The art of painting has an infinite variety, which is why you have to look at the paintings themselves in order to see their peculiarities. One soon becomes tired of descriptions. They leave the imagination vague. The historical treatment is therefore the best for the period to which it belongs. The establishment of a historical collection will be priceless; then it will be possible to trace how painting began with the stiff, the artless; how the characterization of the individual, the beautiful to be depicted, took place later” [my translation].

<sup>61</sup> On Hegel and Schinkel see DILLY, “Hegel und Schinkel”.

<sup>62</sup> Among whom, from 1832, was to be counted H.G. Hotho himself as first assistant at the Gemäldegalerie. On this, see ZIEMER, E. **Heinrich Gustav Hotho. 1802 - 1873. Ein Berliner Kunsthistoriker, Kunstkritiker und Philosoph.** Berlin, Reimer 1994.

<sup>63</sup> “Thus the greatest aid to study and intelligent enjoyment is an *historical* arrangement. Such a collection, historically ordered, unique and invaluable of its kind, we shall soon have an opportunity to admire in the picture gallery of the Royal Museum constructed here in Berlin.” HEGEL. **Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art**, Vol. 2. Sir Thomas Malcolm Knox (Ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 870.

<sup>64</sup> GW 28.2, p. 796.

If Hegel were president of an Academy—probably of the exact Academy that Hirt wanted to musealize—he would understand it as a memorial space, capable of symbolically accommodating intangible monuments of different nations. In fact, he does not mean here “material” monuments or works of art, but rather, as inferred from other passages, literary works; it is therefore a borderline cultural heritage, as tangible as intangible, as real as spiritual and mental.<sup>65</sup> Hegel in another context, when considering epos, seems to offer some examples of these “displayed objects” understood as “Grundbücher”:

Solche Denkmäler einer Nation sind nichts Geringeres als die Grundlagen des Bewußtseins des Volks, sie sind von seinen klassischen Werken zu scheiden, sie gehören dem Volke an dessen Ursprüngliches sie darstellen, dessen ganze Welt sie umfassen, während die klassischen Werke einer späteren und bereits abstrakten Periode anheim fallen. Diese Grundbücher, Bibeln haben eine verschiedene Gestalt, unser Buch ist die Bibel, die Grundlage für die christliche

Religion, bei den Juden ist es das alte Testament, bei den Arabern pp der Koran, welche Bücher somit das Heiligste der Völker | enthalten. Es giebt aber auch Völker die keine solche Bibeln besitzen, wie auch andere derselben ohne bestimmten Inhalt sind. So betreffen die Nibelungen einen Zustand mit welchem kein geschichtlicher Zustand zu verbinden ist, es erscheinen zwar in ihnen Burgunder, auch der Hunnenkoenig Ezel, aber es ist lauter Partikulares. Andere Bücher dieser Art enthalten besondere Seiten der Völker. So ist z. B. das Ritterleben, das schöne Ritterthum im Cid, in dieser Folge von Romanzen geschildert, der Cid steht höher wie viele andere Gedichte, es ist aber doch nur hier eine Seite dargestellt.<sup>66</sup>

These are very fragmented reflections, theoretical splinters shared by Hegel with only the attendees of the Berlin course on Aesthetics in 1826 that would have merited further elaboration in a later phase of publication, which, however, as is well known, never took place by, but which nevertheless seem to suggest some possible proximity to the expression *Weltliteratur*, as the late Goethe was developing it<sup>67</sup>. If, therefore, we were to ask what kind of embryonic

<sup>65</sup> GW 28:2, p. 856.

<sup>66</sup> “Such monuments of a nation are nothing less than the foundations of the consciousness of the people, they are to be separated from its classical works, they belong to the people whose originality they represent, whose world they embrace, while the classical works belong to a later and already abstract period. These basic books, Bibles, have a different form, our book is the Bible, the basis for the Christian religion, for the Jews it is the Old Testament, for the Arabs the Koran, which books thus contain the holiest of peoples. But there are also populations that do not possess such Bibles, just as there are others without any specific content. Thus the Nibelungs concern a state with which no historical state can be connected; Burgundians appear in them, as does the Hun king Ezel, but it is all particular. Other books of this kind contain particular aspects of the peoples. Thus, for example, the life of knights, the beautiful chivalry in the Cid, is described in this series of romances; the Cid stands higher than many other poems, but only one side is depicted here” [my translation].

<sup>67</sup> BIRUS, H. „daß die von mir angerufene Weltliteratur auf mich, wie auf den Zauberlehrling zum ersäufen zuströmt“, in: SCHUSTER, G.; GILLE, C., **Wiederholte Spiegelungen: Weimarer Klassik 1759–1832. Ständige Ausstellung des Goethe-Nationalmuseums**. München: Hanser 1999, p. 801–810.

museum-form Hegel ever had in mind, the answer seems to point us toward a literary, evocative and polyphonic proto-museum, a place of *Bildung*, but also and above all an invisible, global and dematerialized museum of the world's literary monuments, which, however, Hegel does not explicitly label as "museum", but which seems closer to the hybridization with the Academy called for by Hirt in his 1798 essay (and which never came to fruition as much in Berlin as in Weimar). That Hegel was not entirely a stranger to "virtual" and proto-immersive experiences is, moreover, evidenced by his own paradoxical biography, in which the Golden Age of the Grand Tour curiously lacked just such a legendary experience. All the main protagonists of the *Museumstreit* did, after all, stop in Rome—some for longer, some for less time—with the exception of Hegel, who had a filtered but constant experience of Italian art, enjoyed by successive "approximations" in the main European capitals<sup>68</sup>. On the other hand, Rome's antiquarian market constituted the first indispensable reservoir of purchases for the Berlin museum; suffice it to recall that Karl Friedrich Schinkel himself spent about a month in Rome in 1824 to purchase sculptures of gods and mythological figures from the Aldobrandini collection<sup>69</sup>, to be placed in the scenic Rotunda he conceived as the supreme architectural environment capable of evoking the sense of sacredness of art, which by that time had become desacralized. Hegel, as he wrote to his wife Marie<sup>70</sup>, considered himself finally relieved of what he evidently perceived as the cultural obligation of the *Italienreise*, after seeing "virtually" in Paris in 1827 the interiors of St. Peter's in the Neorama, designed by the brothers Jean-Francois (1783–1858) and Jean Alaux (1786–1864).

Add to this the fact that Hegel had contacts with all the leading art collectors and admired the most important collections of his time—such as the Solly Collection, Minutoli's Aegyptica, the Wallraff Collection and the Boisserée—which the philosopher appreciated, of which he speaks in his letters<sup>71</sup>, and which he sometimes mentions during his Berlin Lectures on Aesthetics<sup>72</sup>, yet without ever collecting anything<sup>73</sup> (quite unlike the third protagonist of this

<sup>68</sup> IANNELLI, F.; VERCELLONE, F.; VIEWEG, K. (Eds.), **Hegel und Italien — Italien und Hegel**, Milano, Mimesis Verlag, 2019. IANNELLI, F.; VERCELLONE, F.; VIEWEG, K. (Eds.), **Approssimazioni. Echi del Bel Paese nel sistema hegeliano. Wirkungsgeschichte della filosofia di Hegel in Italia**, Milano: Mimesis, 2022.

<sup>69</sup> FENDT, A. Vollständigkeit und Fragment. Aloys Hirt und die Restaurierung der antiken Plastik für das Königliche Museum, in: **Aloys Hirt in Berlin: Kulturmanagement im frühen 19. Jahrhundert**, p. 346.

<sup>70</sup> See Hegel, G.W.F, **The Letters**, tr. by C. Butler, C. Seiler, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 661.

<sup>71</sup> For example, in his letter of April 2, 1823 in which he refers to the Minutoli collection he intends to visit.

<sup>72</sup> For example, the Boisserée collection is referred to in the Aesthetics course of 1820–21 (GW 28.1, p. 167), whereas the Minutoli collection is mentioned in the 1826 course, GW 28.2, p. 796.

<sup>73</sup> The only exception is constituted by an herbarium, as Hegel confides to Goethe himself, see HEGEL, G.W.F, **The Letters**, tr. by C. Butler, C. Seiler, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 686.

contribution, namely Goethe), thus hinting at a certain disdain for the fetishization of art, sealed by his role as a silent visionary, committed to imagining a museum (of universal literature) that had yet to exist.

### 3. GOETHE, or the “stony guest”

At this point, however, we cannot avoid wondering what place Goethe held in this varied constellation: the poet would seem to be nothing more than a stony guest. At first, in fact, Goethe appears linked to the history of musealization in Germany, first and foremost in that he himself was elevated to a national monument. This process had already begun during his lifetime, on the occasion of the *Festmahl* for Goethe’s 70th birthday in Frankfurt, when on the initiative of Sulpiz Boisserée a “Komitee zur Errichtung eines Goethedenkmals” was established and plans began in the 1820s for a monument to be created by Christian Daniel Rauch. The first design draft presented in Berlin in 1823, however, was not as successful as hoped, so that Bettina von Arnim presented another, far more solemn, featuring Goethe sitting on a throne<sup>74</sup> (figures 2 and 3) and produced a *Gipsmodell* under the supervision of Ludwig Wichmann that would later be produced under the title “Goethe und Psyche” by Carl Steinhäuser in 1851 and exhibited—not without vicissitudes—from 1865 in the staircase of the *Großherzogliches Museum* (now *Neues Museum Weimar*, Fig. 4).



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

<sup>74</sup> This motif, as Christian Hecht well explains, was not new; it had already been used by Bury in an 1800 drawing of Goethe in the guise of Jupiter, cf. HECHT, **Goethes Haus am Weimarer Frauenplan Fassade und Bildprogramm**, Munich: Hirmer, 2020, p. 79.

However, it cannot be forgotten that our stony guest enjoyed surrounding himself with works of art, especially sculptures. Indeed, Goethe wished to feel the presence of statues in his everyday life, wished for them to become part of ordinary life, and without that aura of sacredness that was still perceived in Winckelmann's passionate "Kunstbeschreibungen." This is even more true after his return to Italy, when between 1792 and 1795 his house on the Frauenplan was renovated and contained some representative casts (*Abgüsse*), such as that of a goat-carrying satyr, a greyhound, and the so-called Praying Boy, who was interpreted as Ganymede at the time<sup>75</sup>. Goethe the man was monumentalized as "Nationaldichter", but so was his house on the Frauenplan, and this was well before 1885, when it officially became a museum: it was conceived by its Olympian owner himself as a "work of art"<sup>76</sup>, a dynamic archive<sup>77</sup>, a theatrical scene where Goethe first and foremost staged himself<sup>78</sup>. As Hecht laconically summarizes well: "Das Haus am Frauenplan ist ein Olymp" ("The house on the Frauenplan is an Olympus"), and this transfiguration is evident from its first graphic reproduction dating back to 1823 in *the Journal für Literatur, Kunst, Luxus und Mode*<sup>79</sup>, by which it implicitly assumed the status of a House-museum even before the death of its owner.

What is worthy of pointing out, however, is that Goethe was far more than a granitic stony guest locked up in his mausoleum at the Frauenplan from the time he was alive; in fact, he participated in an original way in the choral reflection on the museum-form and in the birth of the museum as an institution. As Gabriella Catalano writes: "The interest in museums appears constantly in his work," as "Goethe is confronted in every way with the beginnings of a phenomenon"<sup>80</sup>. Most important, it should be remembered that he was interested in collecting from childhood, when he collected sigils, while his father was an avid collector of paintings, engravings, coins and especially books. Goethe was thus linked in many ways to musealization and collecting, understood in a varied and protean sense that ranged from prints to drawings,

<sup>75</sup> For an accurate contextualization of the origin of the casts, see C. SCHREITER, **Antike um jeden Preis. Gipsabgüsse und Kopien antiker Plastik am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts**, Berlin: De Gruyter 2014, pp. 336–37.

<sup>76</sup> CATALANO G., Introduction to J.W. Goethe, *Il collezionista e la sua cerchia*, Napoli: Liguori 2000, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> FABBRI, F. La vertigine dell'archivio. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe e la sua casa sul Frauenplan di Weimar. In: 'The Vertigo of the Archive', **TECA**, 10 (2020), pp. 168–178.

<sup>78</sup> See the testimony of Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau reported in HECHT, **Goethes Haus**, pp. 78–79.

<sup>79</sup> HECHT, **Goethes Haus**, p. 189.

<sup>80</sup> CATALANO, G. **Musei invisibili**, p. 13 and p. 15. See also HECHT, C. Wolfgang: Goethe und die Gründung der Weimarer Gemäldegalerie, in: Hahn, K.-H. (Ed.): **Goethe in Weimar**. Leipzig 1986, pp. 179–193 [my translation].

paintings to coins, medals<sup>81</sup> to majolica, bronze<sup>82</sup> figures to ancient gems<sup>83</sup>, and the *Autographen-Sammlung*.

His art collection also contains about 11,500 prints and drawings, including more than 3,000 pieces of Italian art, a hundred or so pieces of French art, some gifts from contemporary artists such as Angelika Kaufman (who, it is worth mentioning here, was one of the very few female artists also mentioned by Hegel in his Berlin Lectures, see GW 26: 1287). Goethe was in fact an eclectic and encyclopedic collector<sup>84</sup>; suffice it to say that the natural science collections alone contain 23,000 highly heterogeneous objects that can be grouped into curious sub-collections: from the *Schaedelsammlung* to the *Prismensammlung*, which allow us to map Goethe's omnivorous curiosity for all areas of knowledge, as well as his interest in the natural science discoveries of his time.

It is therefore not surprising that in 1795—even before the sensational lecture given by Hirt in Berlin—in a report titled *Ueber die verschiedenen Zweige der hiesigen Tätigkeiten* which was held in the so-called *Freitagsgesellschaft*<sup>85</sup>, Goethe mentioned a museum project he intended to carry out in Jena by gathering in a “Central-Museum”, as he would later call it in the essay *Museen zu Jena*, all the city's collections<sup>86</sup>. Nor is it surprising that Goethe was intent on reflecting on “Sammelpraxis,” as he wrote in the essay *Der Sammler und die Seinigen* (“The collector and his circle”), published in 1799 in the second issue of the *Propyläen*<sup>87</sup>. This essay deserves special attention both because it testifies to Goethe's “Sammlung-Geist” (“taste for collecting”<sup>88</sup>); that is, his attraction to diversity, and because it attempts to offer a mapping of the various types of art users and lovers, as Goethe made clear in his letter to Meyer dated November 27, 1798, in which he makes explicit that the intent of the essay is “to present in a

<sup>81</sup> KLAUSS, J. **Die Medaillensammlung Goethes**, 2. Bde., Hrsg.: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Medaillenkunst und Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Berlin 2000.

<sup>82</sup> Goethe als Sammler figürlicher Bronzen: Sammlungsgeschichte und Bestandskatalog, 2009.

<sup>83</sup> FEMMEL G./HERES G. (Eds.) **Die Gemmen aus Goethes Sammlung**. Herausgegeben von den Nationalen Forschungs- und Gedenkstätten der klassischen deutschen Literatur in Weimar. Leipzig: 1977.

<sup>84</sup> TRUNZ, E. Goethe als Sammler. **Weimarer Goethe-Studien**, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 1980, pp. 7–47. HÖPPNER, S. Cultural Heritage versus Legal Inheritance: Conflicting Views of Goethe's Material Possessions, or Rereading His Personal Library. **Goethe Yearbook**, vol. 27, 2020, p. 119-136. MACLEOD C. Goethe the Collector. In: Lee, C. (Ed.), **Goethe in Context. Literature in Context**. Cambridge University Press; 2024, pp. 166–174.

<sup>85</sup> WA 53, p. 489 s.

<sup>86</sup> WA I, 53, p. 291–304.

<sup>87</sup> MÜLLER, L. Der Sammler und die Seinigen, in: Beyer, A., Osterkamp, E. (Eds.) **Goethe Handbuch**. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2011, pp. 8–19.

<sup>88</sup> “The collector and his circle”, in Cage, J. (Ed.), **Goethe on Art**, University of California Press, 1980, p. 32.

cheerful way the different directions that artists and enthusiasts can take, if they do not start from the whole of art, but stick to individual parts”.<sup>89</sup>

Among these directions, not surprisingly, particular attention will be paid to the aesthetic-artistic perspective of Hirt, who is presented in the Fifth Letter through the literary figure of the stranger, a refined connoisseur with great artistic sensitivity and expertise who visits the family collection of the narrator of the essay *The collector and his circle*. Despite an initial apparent sharing of views<sup>90</sup>, the foreigner (Hirt) and the collector (Goethe) totally diverge on the definition of beauty, which the foreigner finds unthinkable “without character” (“ohne Charakter”)<sup>91</sup>. This will be so true that, even beyond the poetic narrative, Hirt would continue to defend this thesis even after Goethe’s death in an 1833 essay (*Die Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Alten*, 1833) where he asserted that among the ancients beautiful and ugly can coexist, as long as the figures express the characteristic he codified in the *Versuch ueber das Kunstschoene* of 1797, which was later taken up by Hegel.<sup>92</sup>

This profound aesthetic divergence between Hirt and Goethe, which finds immortal expression through the poetic narrative of the essay *The collector and his circle*, however, would concern not only the controversial aesthetic category of the characteristic, but also the museological program itself. This theoretical distance on the nascent museum institution, however, remained more latent and implicit, as evidenced by the epistolary exchanges between the two intellectuals. In the previously mentioned letter, written by Hirt on May 10, 1830 to Goethe, the Berliner *Altertumswissenschaftler* indeed shared with sobriety but also with determination—his defeat in the Berlin *Museumstreit*:

Meine Geschäfte zur Einrichtung des Museum, denen ich seit Jahren her viele Zeit opferte, habe ich bereits seit einem Jahre abgegeben. Mit der ietzigen Aufstellung habe ich nichts zu thun.<sup>93</sup>

In truth, Goethe had long been aware of Hirt’s patricide as “Grundervater” of the Berlin Museum, as evidenced by his letter of June 29, 1829 to C. L. F. Schultz:

Unser Freund Hirt erfährt nun, was Napoleon erfahren mußte: *Wer den Menschen allzu unbequem wird, hat zu erwarten, daß sie sich doch zuletzt*

<sup>89</sup> My translation; “die verschiedenen Richtungen [,] welche Künstler und Liebhaber nehmen können, wenn sie nicht aufs Ganze der Kunst ausgehen, sondern sich an einzelne Theile halten, auf heitere Weise darzustellen”, WA IV, 13, p. 320.

<sup>90</sup> “His judgment in many cases agree with mine”, in: “The collector and his circle”, pp. 47–48.

<sup>91</sup> “The collector and his circle”, p. 48.

<sup>92</sup> GW 28.3, p. 919.

<sup>93</sup> “I already gave up my business of setting up the museum a year ago, to which I had devoted a lot of time for years. I have nothing to do with the current installation” [my translation].

*zusammenthun und ihn beseitigen. Dabey glaubt denn doch ein solcher mit festem Gefühl, man thue ihm durchaus Unrecht.*<sup>94</sup>

The tone of these few lines sent to Schultz makes it immediately clear that Goethe did not see Hirt's museum failure as an irreparable loss, so much so that he did not write any consoling words in his reply to Hirt dated May 24, 1830, even though the planning of the *Altes Museum* had coincided with the public deconstruction of Hirt's reputation as an art expert<sup>95</sup>, to which Hotho also contributed<sup>96</sup>.

In fact, from the time of his Roman stay, when the young Hirt guided Goethe as a talented Cicero in the eternal city, the latter developed an almost fetishistic intimacy and interest in artistic artifacts and copies, from which he would never free himself. Similarly, the museum conception that Goethe would develop over time would not be soberly didactic, nor merely historical, but rather strongly heterogeneous, evocative, and inviting to critical comparison through presences and especially lacunae. Indeed, it should be remembered that Goethe's name would also remain linked to German museum history and in particular to that of Weimar, where the museum developed in close contact with the Drawing School founded in 1774, from which sprang the exhibitions of 1809-11 in the *Fürstenhaus* and 1824 in the *Großen Jägerhaus* in Marienstraße<sup>97</sup>. Although we know little about the first exhibition attempt that ran from September 1809 to January 1811, except that it was the auroral experience of the later pictorial gallery, well known is the arrangement of the six rooms of the *Jägerhaus* documented by the 1824 "Index" edited by Johann Heinrich Meyer<sup>98</sup>, where the principle of vertiginous synchronicity reigns, and which testifies to how far Goethe was from Hirt's historical-linear criterion—which Hegel himself, as we have seen, appreciated—but also how much he agreed with his former Cicero in his heavy reliance on copies; suffice it to say that as many as 35 copies of paintings from the *Dresden Picture Gallery* were on display, and that almost all of the Italian painters on display (from Correggio to Guido Reni) were copies.

<sup>94</sup> WA, IV, Bd. 45, Nr. 258, p. 310: "Our friend Hirt now learns what Napoleon had to learn: anyone who makes people too uncomfortable must expect that they will finally get together and eliminate him. Yet such a man believes with a firm feeling that he is being wronged" [my translation].

<sup>95</sup> SCHROEDTER, B. Aloys Hirt als Kenner, in: Aloys Hirt in Berlin: Kulturmanagement im frühen 19. Jahrhundert, pp. 59–82, here p. 59.

<sup>96</sup> ZIEMER, Heinrich Gustav Hotho. pp. 57–65.

<sup>97</sup> See for more details HECHT, W.: Goethe und die Gründung der Weimarer Gemäldegalerie, in: Hahn, K.-H. (Ed.): **Goethe in Weimar**. Leipzig: 1986: pp. 179–193.

<sup>98</sup> Verzeichnis der im großen Jägerhaus zu Weimar ausgestellten Gemälde, Zeichnungen, Bildhauerarbeiten, 1824. Kunstsammlungen Archiv Weimar.

Thus, from 1825 to 1837, the *Großes Jägerhaus* was opened to the public as a museum in Weimar, whose underlying principle was that of multiplicity and intersectionality: the irreverent and daring contamination between works from different periods, between copies and originals, between high and low, between past and present in short circuits, inviting visitors to the interpretation of this rather unorthodox museum that owed its museographic design precisely to Goethe. This was a rather peculiar museum that did not have a strong didactic nature as Hirt advocated, nor did it follow a historical criterion, as any pictorial gallery should have done according to Hegel, rather it was traversed by “disparity”<sup>99</sup>. Many reproductions of great masterpieces were on display, in keeping with Goethe’s almost erotic attraction to copies, which accorded well with what Hirt advocated, but which would instead have been deemed “heretical” by Humboldt. Indeed, the *Grossen Jägerhaus* displayed copies of Raphael’s *School of Athens* and the *Madonna with the Goldfinch*, and of the angels of the *Sistine Madonna*, which visitors were urged to engage in dialogue with works by contemporary artists such as Elisa Gore, Luise Seidler, and Friedrich Preller, or with sculptures by G. Weisser or Peter Kauffmann scattered throughout the six rooms; there was also no shortage of originals by Tiepolo or Jan Scorel (then erroneously attributed to Holbein). This brief description alone may suffice to clarify how much theoretical and aesthetic distance there was between the museum project advocated by Goethe in Weimar (which would later end in 1837, five years after the poet’s death) and the one that was conceived, not without tension, and which was inaugurated in the same years in the Prussian capital, which would eventually engulf other museum experiments, leaving in Weimar space for only what was evidently perceived as the authentic Goethean museum; that is, the museal house of our “stony guest,” a treasure chest of his immense and encyclopedic collections.

### *Conclusions*

The first public museum to open near the *Lustgarten* in 1830 attracted visitors from every country and made Berlin a “must-see stop” on the burgeoning nineteenth-century cultural tourism trail, anticipating and setting the stage for what the city still represents today. Two outstanding proto-feminist visitors, such as Fanny Lewald and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, spoke rapturously of it as an unforgettable and unique experience.<sup>100</sup> Hirt, Hegel and Goethe

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<sup>99</sup> CATALANO, *Musei invisibili*, pp. 186–188

<sup>100</sup> SAVOY, B.; SISSIS, P. (Eds.). *Die Berliner Museumsinsel. Impressionen internationaler Besucher (1830–1990). Eine Anthologie*. Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2013, pp. 19–20 and pp. 47–49.

participated, each in their own way, in a choral construction of the museal imaginary. We can conclude, however, that none of the three protagonists investigated in this essay identified (entirely) with the museum that opened in Berlin on August 3, 1830 and which is now known as *Altes Museum*, to which, on the other hand, the names of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Gustav Friedrich Waagen and Karl Friedrich von Ruhmor (alongside the sculptors Rauch and Tieck, the restorer Schlesinger) who were part of the second *Museumskommission* headed by Humboldt after Hirt's resignation in 1829, will be forever linked.

He who had first envisioned the Berlin museum as a place of study and educational oasis that was yet to exist, namely Hirt, thus remained the dethroned pioneer of the founding of the Berlin museum institution, whose groundbreaking museum project was overtaken and swept away by reality. The renowned Berliner *Altertumswissenschaftler* Hirt thus ended up leading an extraordinary cultural process that nonetheless engulfed him, because his founding father remained anchored in an idea of a museum that was also rapidly transformed as a result of the changing political scenario, as Prussia in 1806–1807 lost not only the war, but also its art treasures, which it would regain shortly thereafter as a result of Napoleon's defeat in 1815. Such changed international balances created the conditions for a strongly patriotic emotional scenario that would shape the planning of the museum institution after 1815, understood as cultural revenge against France. The figure of Hirt is thus, as we have been suggesting, that of a blind forerunner who envisioned a “Nevermuseum” that in the late eighteenth century had yet to exist and—strictly speaking—never would<sup>101</sup>.

That Hegel himself did not totally agree with the conception and layout of the *Altes Museum* can be deduced from the “noisy” silence that runs through his Berlin Lectures and works, and which is interrupted only once—and rather concisely—in the epistolary<sup>102</sup>. It is very likely that Hegel personally discussed with his friend Hirt the exhibition criteria adopted at the time, the choice of works of art to be exhibited (copies of masterpieces or originals, albeit of works of lesser value), and the then conflicting views on the arrangement (decorative, emotional or reconstructive). On the other hand, Hegel seemed to be engaged in the titanic construction of “his” invisible museum in the Lectures on Aesthetics that he continued to reorganize and set

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<sup>101</sup> Rather, Bredekamp and Labuda point to Friedrich August Stüler's Neue Museum (built between 1843 and 1855) as the ‘Berlin institution closest to Hirt's museum conception. Cf. BREDEKAMP H.; LABUDA, A.S. *Kunstgeschichte, Universität, Museum und die Mitte Berlins 1810–1873*, In: **Geschichte der Universität Unter den Linden 1810-2010: Praxis ihrer Disziplinen**. Band 4: Genese der Disziplinen. Die Konstitution der Universität, edited by Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010, pp. 237–264.

<sup>102</sup> Letter to Creuzer, 6 May 1823. See Hegel, G.W.F, **The Letters**, tr. by C. Butler, C. Seiler, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 369.

up from course to course, starting as early as 1818 in Heidelberg until 1829 in Berlin. Alongside such an imposing imaginary museum—which thus remained stationary in 1829 and found only partial correspondence in the *Altes Museum* inaugurated in 1830—we catch a glimpse in the *Ästhetikvorlesungen* of another, no less invisible and evocative—hypothesized timidly in the course of 1826—made of the literary suggestions offered by the musealization of the “monumenta Nationum,” which testifies to how interested Hegel was in truth in the short-circuits aroused by the museum-form and its conception in continuity or discontinuity with the Academy. What is visionary and still unfinished in these tentative hints, however, is the global character of the Hegelian proposal, which in so many modern-day museums of literature often remains parcelled, localized and boxed in, without its universal character<sup>103</sup>.

Finally, even the museum sensibility and obsession with encyclopaedic collecting typical of the third protagonist of this essay, namely Goethe, seems poorly represented in the Berlin *Altes Museum*, to which, however, the *Weimarer Kunstfreunde* constantly looked, albeit from a distance<sup>104</sup>, to develop through a slow gestation process their own original museum model.<sup>105</sup>

One final question still remains: namely, how these three intellectuals in their relative museum programs, more or less articulated, can coexist and fruitfully enter into synergy in our present to rethink the museum of the future. Hirt is undoubtedly the most sober intellectual of the three protagonists considered here, at times pedantic as he appeared to Goethe himself, but this seemingly old-fashioned idea of the museum<sup>106</sup>, as an eminently educational place, can serve as a corrective and antidote in today’s museum constellation, in which the museum is engulfed by gamification, social media, edutainment and immersiveness. In contrast, the museum visions of Hegel and Goethe are, for different reasons, both “excessive”: in the imaginary museum or invisible museum of Hegel’s “monumenta nationum”, there is an excess of abstraction and dematerialization; whereas in the panoptic museum of an *Augenmensch* like Goethe, there is a visual and material overabundance. These two museum proposals can certainly dialogue in our present, in which artificial intelligence itself is revolutionizing museum languages, improving accessibility, enhancing interactivity and ensuring inclusiveness. The aesthetic legacy of Hegel and Goethe in the museum field could thus complement each other; after all, Hegel

<sup>103</sup> See for instance ANASTASIO, M.; RHEIN, J. (Eds.). **Transitzonen zwischen Literatur und Museum**, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2023.

<sup>104</sup> CATALANO, **Musei invisibili**, p. 185.

<sup>105</sup> BOTHE, R., Zur Entstehung der Kunstsammlungen in Weimar. In: Bollenbeck, G.; Golz, J.; Knoche, M.; Steierwald, U. (eds): **Weimar: Archäologie eines Ortes**. Böhlau Weimar/Stuttgart 2001.

<sup>106</sup> That in truth it is not, also emerges in the essay by BREDEKAMP/LABUDA, *Kunstgeschichte, Universität, Museum und die Mitte Berlins 1810–1873*, pp. 237–264.

himself seemed to suggest such a path in a famous letter to the poet<sup>107</sup>. On the other hand, the forerunner Hirt, with the strongly pedagogical vocation of his shattered museum dream, could ensure greater dissemination and communicative impact, helping to make “real” the “Never-museum” that had yet to exist.

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WA = Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, **Goethes Werke** (Weimarer Ausgabe), Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Großherzogin Sophie von Sachsen, Weimar: Böhlau, 1887ff.

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<sup>107</sup> “For when I look back over the course of my intellectual development, I see you everywhere woven into it, and may call myself one of your sons: what is inward in me has been nourished by you [in its growth] toward resilient strength in the face of abstraction, and has oriented its course by your forms as by beacons”, Hegel, G.W.F, **The Letters**, p. 708.

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