

Introductie

Hans Scharoun's 'The Message of Baroque' (1964)

Hans Scharoun schreef deze tekst als introductie bij het boek *Baroque. Italie et Europe centrale* van Pierre Charpentrat, dat in 1964 verscheen in de reeks *Architecture Universelle*. Deze reeks is onder andere in het Nederlands, Engels, Duits en het Italiaans gepubliceerd, zodat er tussen 1964 en 1967 talrijke edities van verschenen. Charpentrat's tekst, rijkelijk geïllustreerd met foto's van Peter Heman en voorzien van talloze plattegronden en doorsneden, richt zich tot een publiek van leken en kenners. Het voorwoord van Scharoun past in de strategie van de uitgever om bekende hedendaagse architecten te vragen de historische studies in te leiden. Hoewel het dus heel goed mogelijk is dat Charpentrat weinig of niets met de keuze voor Scharoun te maken heeft gehad (hij heeft ook niet over Scharoun gepubliceerd), sluit zijn inleiding goed aan bij de opvatting over barok die Charpentrat in zijn eigen werk ontwikkelde. Aan de hand van de functies die barokke gebouwen moesten vervullen en de interactie tussen architecten en religieus geïnspireerde opdrachtgevers, probeerde hij een nauwkeurige analyse te maken van de barokke vorm – die voor hem bij uitstek architecturaal en ruimtelijk was. Deze analyse openbaarde volgens Charpentrat fundamentele analogieën tussen de barok en het beste modernisme, dat immers eveneens gekenmerkt wordt door anti-academisme, functionalisme en een bewustzijn van het formele en ruimtelijke aspect van de architectuur. In die zin sluit Charpentrat's werk op een kritische manier aan bij dat van Heinrich Wölfflin en Sigfried Giedion, en heeft het bijgedragen aan zowel de Franse studie van de barok als het Franse debat over het modernisme.

Introduction

Hans Scharoun's 'The Message of Baroque' (1964)

Hans Scharoun wrote this text as an introduction to Pierre Charpentrat's *Baroque: Italie et Europe centrale*, published in 1964 as part of the *Architecture Universelle* collection. This series was also published in Dutch, English, German, Italian and other languages, so multiple editions of this book came out between 1964 and 1967. Charpentrat's text, generously illustrated with photographs by Peter Heman and featuring countless plans and sections, is aimed at an audience of both lay people and experts. Scharoun's foreword is part of the publisher's strategy of having renowned contemporary architects introduce its historical studies. While it is quite possible that Charpentrat had little or nothing to do with the selection of Scharoun (none of his published writings are on Scharoun), it fits in well with the attitude towards the Baroque that Charpentrat developed in his own work. He endeavoured to lay out a painstaking analysis of the Baroque form – to him quintessentially architectural and spatial – based on the functions that Baroque buildings were supposed to fulfil and the interaction between architects and religiously inspired patrons. This analysis, according to Charpentrat, revealed fundamental analogies between the Baroque and the best of modernism, which was similarly characterised by anti-academicism, functionalism and an awareness of the formal and spatial aspect of architecture. In that respect, Charpentrat's work dovetails with that of Heinrich Wölfflin and Sigfried Giedion, and it has contributed both to the French study of the Baroque and to the French debate on modernism.

Translation: Pierre Bouvier

Preface

By Hans Scharoun

The Message of Baroque

The climate of Baroque, the various elements which characterized the buildings, and the origins and styles of the architects of the period are all dealt with exhaustively in this book. Thus, demands of the present have been amply fulfilled by illustrating our connections with that time. The following observations may serve to underline the necessity for a critical comparison correlating current trends with historical phenomena.

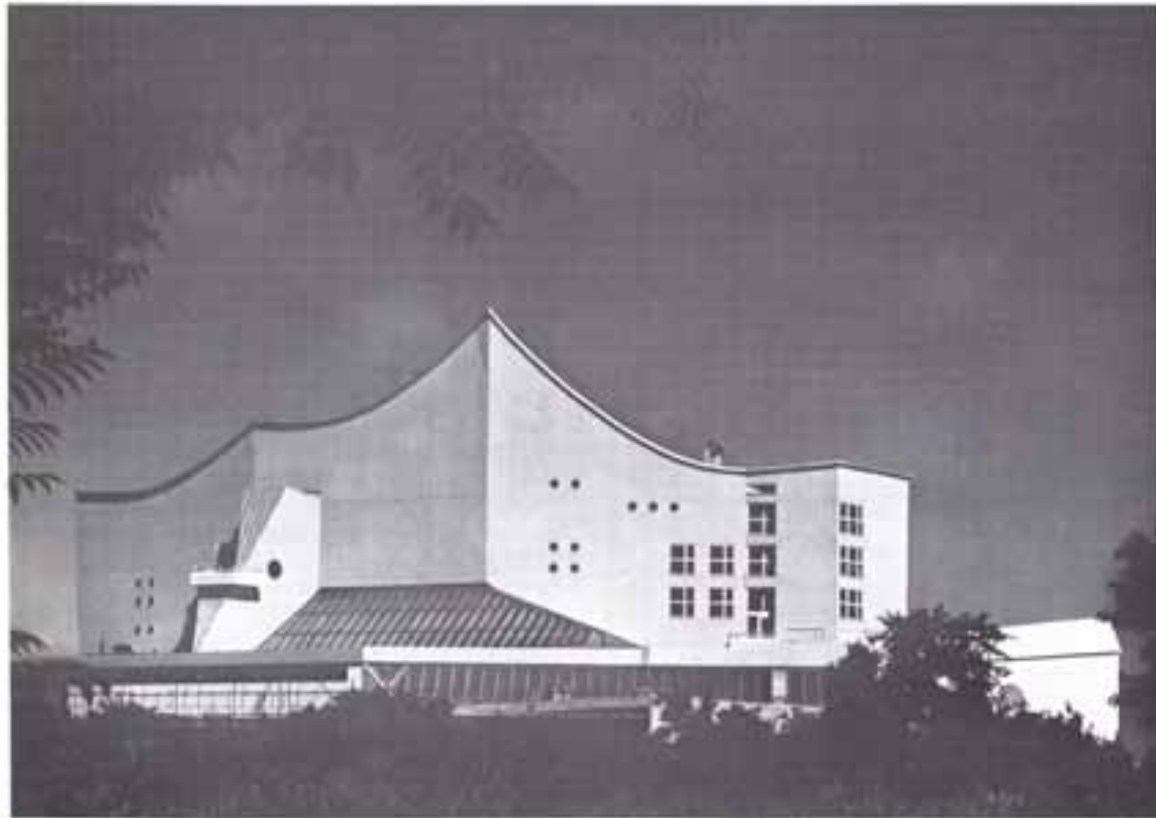
If we do not subscribe to Spengler's view that all great civilizations are so many defeats, but follow Hugo Häring, who defends the genesis of mankind – its integration with the actual creative process – we see the great civilizations as the tasks which are given to mankind to be dealt with step by step in the workrooms, in the field of tension of rational and irrational, the rational which had its roots in the Greek sphere of influence. From now on it was linked with geometrical forms such as the rectangle (Greece) and the circle (Rome) until it attained the two-poled ellipse which gave the Baroque, especially in its Late German form, character and tension. This finds expression particularly in Baroque church architecture. Its character is a result not only of liberation from dogmatic petrification, which was the final fate of the Renaissance; nor is it an emotional illustration of the Reformed Religion. The ecstatic quality of Baroque art in its radical purposefulness accords with the pattern of behavior of Baroque man in general. Civilization is a living homogeneous structure.

In this connection let us focus on problems of structure that have again assumed importance in contemporary architecture. In the Middle Ages, planning and building were subordinated to the requirements of religious symbolism; the Baroque approach relates man directly to interior space. In Southern Germany, especially, it

replaces the traditional spatial conception by open space. This, though on another plane, is also a present-day claim. In 'Handbuch der Kulturgeschichte.' Willi Fleming mentions the contradictions characteristic of Baroque man: his extrovert self-centredness and his fervor for the hereafter. From this sprang conflicts and mannerisms in architecture and behavior in order to 'adapt the world completely to the

glorification of the ego.' The oscillations of parabola and ellipse signify passionate involvement of the individual with the fathomless universe. The monastery library at Metten demonstrates this conflict between the craving for individual importance and human endeavor: in a symbolic manner it represents a dramatic yet obviously uncomfortable state of mind, knowledge and power held in balance.

The new Philharmonic building, Berlin, by Hans Scharoun



The main hall, Philharmonic building, Berlin

Another problem of contemporary architecture is the attention given to the 'action.' The Baroque, too, saw structures adapted to proceedings which found their expression in various types of church plan. This also applies to the arrangement of theater design – as, for example, in Bayreuth. The rigid seating plan of this building reflects the social structure of the time. The stalls were reserved for the populace and could become the scene of the action when, for instance, they performed country dances. This purposeful direction of consciousness towards an object is a matter of intentional imagination. What concerns, stimulates and excites us today, is the manifold, ecstatic and, in its successful moments, timeless result achieved. A radical opinion here becomes a work of art. The creation of a second natural world, worked on since by

later epochs, found in the Baroque its first spontaneous realization as impulsive invasion of nature and reality – thus the great layouts of parks endeavoring to recreate nature, and the delight in robot-like automata.

What happens, takes place in an atmosphere of power-politics. But one thing is remarkable – while secular building remains largely a question of exteriors (apart from a few staterooms and a lavish display of staircases), the churches achieve a unity of component parts, whether their mood is tragic, gay or dramatic. Here is another association with today – the stirring of the creative imagination in science and art, especially in architecture, tends towards a restoration of unity.

Once more we must stress that the richness of earthly power is expressed in structural geometrical forms. The Baroque repeats these forms, and arches them over with the two-poled ellipse, the discovery of this last great stylistic period. This century-old individualistic civilization is replaced by a subjective 'Weltanschauung' and ends in authoritarian absolutism.

Nowadays, artistic development is no longer left to individual intuition, as with the Baroque. Humanity has a new task. Yet we could never perceive it in its entirety without knowledge of what has preceded it. It is therefore extremely important that we should concern ourselves with the work of the Baroque which still influences our world today.

Berlin 1964

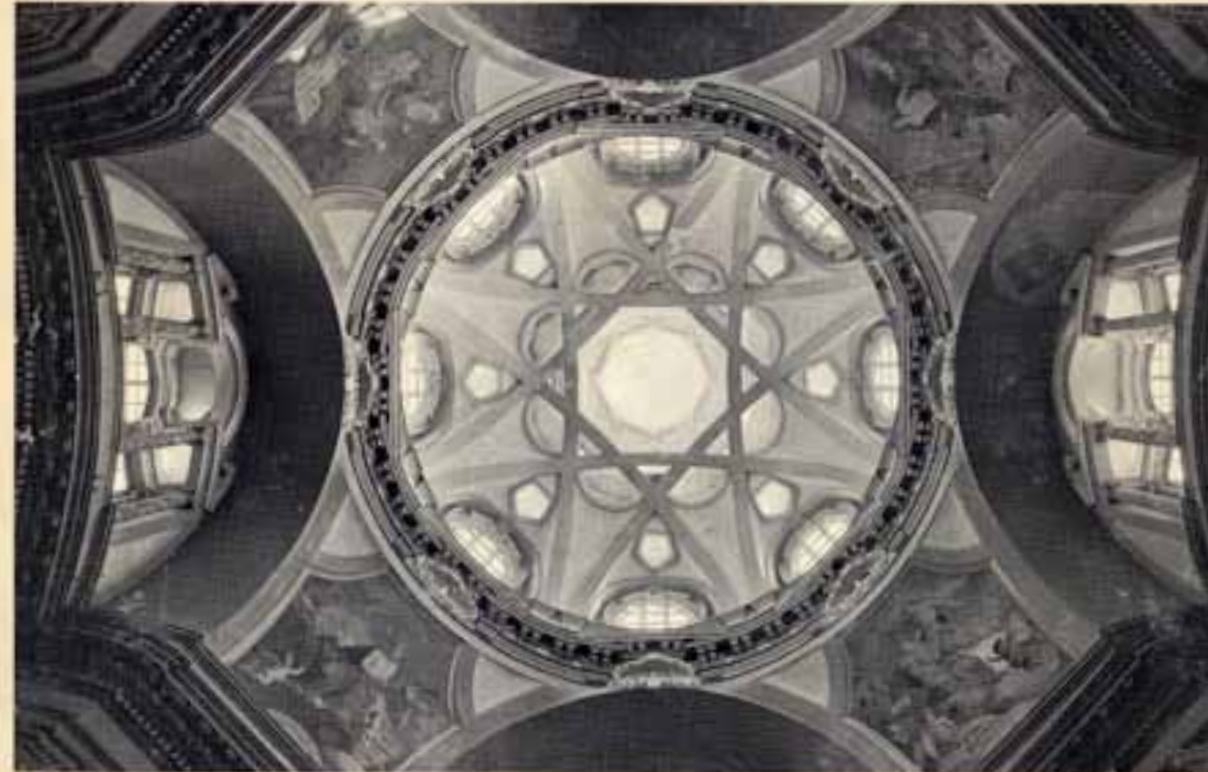
Concert hall of the Philharmonic building, showing the irregular galleries surrounding the orchestra



LIVING ARCHITECTURE: Baroque

By **PIERRE CHARPENTRAT**

Preface by HANS SCHAROUN



A CONTEMPORARY APPRAISAL, WITH ALL NEW PHOTOGRAPHS, OF A GREAT ARCHITECTURAL EPOCH OF THE PAST