

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCES  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
School of Doctoral Studies from Art History

DR. GYÖRGY SZÉPHELYI F.

**From Contempt to Reception**  
Judging the Baroque – from the second half  
of the 19. century to the 1920s  
**Theses of the PhD dissertation**

**Supervisor**

Ernő Marosi MHAS

**Head of the Doctoral School and  
President of the Committee**

Dr. György Kelényi DSc.

**Referees**

Dr. Ferenc Gosztonyi PhD.

Dr. Gábor Pataki CSc.

**Secretary of the committee**

Dr. Julianna Ágoston PhD.

**Further members of the committee**

Dr. Péter Kőszeghy PhD.

Dr. Mária Prokopp PhD.

Dr. Anna Eörsi PhD.

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## I. Research topic

The points that motivated the writing of my theses – and should legitimate them as well – are the following:

The topic which is not so easy to describe has – in my opinion – some significance at least within the context of my chosen discipline. What may cause some difficulties in this context is that my paper refers to several fields of research strategically detached, nevertheless essentially contiguous, such as the descriptive (historiographically treated) history of art of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (as well as that of the early 20th century), but at the same time the interpretative-polemical discussion of such a complex phenomenon as historicism, the history of art historiography and that of the preservation of art monuments. Within the hierarchy (or rather: the complex) of the sub-disciplines and fields of practice mentioned above I have chosen – not only occasionally but also according to programme – the history of art history as the definitive point of view. Thus the theme is the *forming of the image of the Baroque* both in critical and absolute terms.

## II. Outcome of the present study and pertinent literature

1. I am convinced that the forming of this image is contingent upon our attitude to the *Baroque proper*, namely whether we consider the latter as something accomplished or even dead for once and for all, or as something – a tradition – ready to rise again. This latter attitude may lead to an empirical revitalizing of the style, as it – *mutatis mutandis* – it did. Of course I am referring to the *Neo-Baroque* here. This term occurs in the literature of art history sometimes in a latent form, sometimes explicitly. In this regard, we must consider the interference of certain traditions with respect to both terminology and periodization. Architectural history is *par excellence* inclined to eliminate the term *Neo-Baroque* undoubtedly under the influence of such a person of authority as the late Renate WAGNER-RIEGER. (e.g. *Wiens Architektur im 19. Jahrhundert*, 1978.) At the same time, the highly problematic character of the category of historicism/historicism has not ceased to be up to now. (See first of all the magistral work of Friedrich MEINECKE 1936, then through the studies of Wolfgang GÖTZ 1970, 1975, H.G. EVERS, 1967, to that of Lajos NÉMETH in ZÁDOR (ed.) 1993. Still especially remarkable for its critical sense is the article written by Géza HAJÓS, *Klassizismus und Historismus – Epochen oder Gesinnungen?*, "ÖZKD", 1978, also in Hungarian translation in ZÁDOR (ed.) 1993.)

In regard to the application of the term *eclecticism* (which, in general, I by no means consider irrelevant) I could not help referring to the – to a certain extent arrogant – statement of another great authority, namely H.-R. Hitchcock: "Many historians, in despair, have merely labelled the period

after 1850 'Eclectic' as if earlier periods of architecture ... had not also been eclectic, also admittedly to a lesser degree". (Id.: *Architecture. Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 1959. Simultaneously, one should also consider: C.L.V. MEEKS, *Italian Architecture 1750-1914*, 1966; Béla NEY, *Magyar építészeti stílus*, "Magyar Mérnök- és Építészeti-Egylet Közleményei" 1871; László GERÖ, *Az építészet koraeklektikus stílusa*, "Művészettörténeti Értesítő", 1952; Ferenc VAMOS, *Eklektika, romantika, klasszicizmus*, "Magyar Építőművészet", 1955; Cf. Anna ZÁDOR, *Palladianism in the Eclectic Architecture of Hungary*, "Acta Technica", 1970. But I am no less convinced that the rather late "wertlos" interpretation (and, paradoxically, also appreciation) of the Baroque may also be independent from the actual formation of contemporary art and architecture.

Nevertheless, we can often come across the term Neo-Baroque exposed more or less explicitly in the Austrian literature, too (still with full respect shown towards Wagner-Rieger): as a subtitle in Elisabeth SPRINGER, *Geschichte und Kulturleben der Wiener Ringstrasse*, 1981, as the title of an extensive chapter in Werner KITLITSCHKA, *Die Malerei der Wiener Ringstrasse*, 1981; finally, in a programmatic function, as the title of a whole section in Walter KRAUSE, *Einleitung* [zum Teil 2.]: *Albert Ilg und die Wiener Neubarock* (In: Friedrich POLLEROß (ed.): *Fischer von Erlach und die Wiener Barocktradition*, 1995.) See also: Eva-Maria Landwehr, *Neubarock: Architektur und Ausstattungskonzepte süddeutscher Sakralbauten um 1900*, 2003.

2. We can observe a certain tendency within the formation of the image in question, namely in the direction I should like to suggest: the receptivity increases in direct proportion to tolerance (parallel to the progress in research

from relative skills to full proficiency). Nevertheless, we must not overlook many militant publications of a fairly late date in defence of the Baroque: [Albert ILG:] *Die Zukunft des Barockstils. Eine Kunstepistel von Bernini dem Jüngern*, 1880, Joseph NEUWIRTH, *Im Kampfe um Barock und Rokoko (Mitteilungen der k.k. Zentral-Kommission..., 1906.)*, Hans TIETZE, *Der Kampf um Alt-Wien (Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der k.k. Zentralkommission..., 1910.)*, etc. and the most ostentative – and in respect to its very late date *a fortiori* – Max DVORÁK's *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege*, 1918 [!]. The latter clearly demonstrates what an immense destruction could still be carried on in an age when art history and the protection of monuments had already possessed an institutionally supported authority. *Pro memoria: vandalism* (see Victor Hugo, Prosper Mérimée, Georg Dehio, Julius von Végh, Paul Clemen, Louis Réau *et al.* Cf. Martin WARNKE (ed.), *Bildersturm. Die Zerstörung des Kunstwerkes*, 1988.) could still be continued even in recent times (you can regard it as a paradigm both for the significance of the monuments in question and for the aggressive and *borniert* intervention of political ideology: the so-called Schloß in Berlin and that in Potsdam. See lately: Hartmut ELLRICH, *Das Berliner Schloß. Geschichte und Wiederaufbau*, 2008.).

Of course, we are not in short of such cases here in Hungary either. What an abundance of sad, I dare to say scandalous stories! The most well-known and most ostentative among them is the ill-fated high altar of the St. Martin's Church in Pozsony (see the publications, documents, applications etc. by József KÖNYÖKI [Ellenbogen], Imre HENSZLMANN, Gyula FORSTER, Ernő FOERK *passim*, partly published in *Lapis Angularis II*. OMvH-MÉM 1998. a certain summary in Ernő MAROSI, *Lippert József pozsonyi főoltára, "Ars Hungarica"*, 1994). But some cathedrals are also worth

mentioning because of the almost total elimination of their Baroque past: e.g. Pécs (See the respective publications of Béla CZOBOR, 1882; Péter GERECZE, 1893; Ottó SZÖNYI, 1916; László BOROS, 1985, etc.) or Veszprém (a brief, but perhaps the only coherent treatment of the problem, together with archive photos can be found in Géza GALAVICS, *Antonio Galli-Bibiena in Ungheria e in Austria, "Acta Historiae Artium"*, 1984). Some (alas, several) further items can be added, the least well-known is the case of the scandalous pulling down of the St. Demeter's Cathedral in Szeged in 1913 (although compensated by a precious discovery, see Károly Cs. SEBESTYÉN, 1925, cf. lately Béla Zsolt SZAKÁCS's article on Béla CZOBOR in Ernő MAROSI–Gábor KLANICZAY (ed.): *The Nineteenth-Century „Musealization” in Hungary and Europe*, 2006.) A brief, but coherent survey of the Hungarian institutional activity in the field of protection of monuments with a special regard to baroque art can be found in Katalin G. GYÖRFFY's article in: Ferenc VADAS (ed.), *Maradandóság és változás*, Ráckeve, 2000. [2004.]

3. Of course, different branches of art all have different relationship to the Baroque. It seems, the medium, where – if not the baroque proper, then – the Rococo has a deep impact on the actual artistic productivity is the applied arts. The latter shows the greatest receptivity towards the rebirth of the old styles in form of Neo-Baroque and Neo-Rococo. (See first of all Marianne ZWEIG, *Zweites Rokoko. Innenraume und Hausrat in Wien um 1830-60*, 1924, and several studies by Eva B. OTTILLINGER, 1987, 1989, 1995, 1997, 2001 etc.)

4. Any attitude to the Baroque is evidently suspected of having a certain (whatever slight) ideological charge. Yet, the ideological approach (and especially the mechanistic application of its method) must not be recommended, since we ought to differentiate very cautiously in every relation: national – cosmopolitan, religious (differentiated also according to denomination) – secular, also with a special regard to the social stratification, etc. There can be no doubt: of its potential patrons, dynasties possessed the greatest affinity to the Baroque. (See Heinz GOLLWITZER, *Zum Fragenkreis Architekturhistorismus und politische Ideologie*, "Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte", 1979, Martin WARNKE, *Die Entstehung des Barockbegriffs in der Kunstgeschichte*, In: Klaus GARBNER (ed.): *Europäische Barockrezeption II.*, 1991; Douglas KLAR, *The Kaiser Builds in Berlin.: Expressing National and Dynastic Identity in the Early Building Projects of Wilhelm II.*, 2002; Andreas NIERHAUS, *Höfisch und Österreichisch. Zur Architektur des Neobarock in Wien*, In: Moritz CSÁKY– Federico CELESTINI–Ulrich TRAGATSCHNIG (ed.), *Barock – ein Ort des Gedächtnisses*, 2007; Werner TELESKO–Richard KURDIOFSKY–Andreas NIERHAUS (ed.), *Die Wiener Hofburg und der Residenzbau in Mitteleuropa im 19. Jahrhundert: Monarchische Repräsentation zwischen Ideal und Wirklichkeit*, 2010.

Of the multidimensionality suggested here, it follows that several aspects of the complex theme I have chosen are still in need of a proportional elaboration. I suppose that my students and perhaps some of my fellow researchers can already find some useful data, thoughts and ideas.

Finally, my paper is a sort of lengthy *Forschungsbericht* and a draft of a labour-consuming project.

In order to realize this latter aim, I do need the strong intellectual support of my colleagues and fellow-researchers, and I hope they on their part will also be ready to help me.

### **III. Publications within the topic of the discourse**

„*barokk*”- main entry in: KÖSZEGHY Péter (ed.), *Magyar Művelődéstörténeti Lexikon, Középkor és kora újkor*, Vol. I (Aachen–Bylica) Bp. 2003. 217–239.

„*Der arme Heinrich*”. *Heinrich Geymüller és Jacob Burckhardt esete a barokkal*. Before publication.