Kurt Baschwitz
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Epilogue

On the further fate of the cluster of institutions founded by him

Just a few further words on how Baschwitz’s intellectual biography connects to the sprawling current theory and practice of communication and media studies at the University of Amsterdam today. Baschwitz’s immediate legacy mainly consisted of two parts. First: newspaper or press studies (later also radio, television, and mass communication science), with special attention to its historical aspects. Second: (social and) mass psychology, public opinion, and propaganda (later also labelled collective behaviour, audience studies, and media effects by others).

In the press field, Baschwitz was succeeded as professor by Maarten Rooij (from 1957 to 1972), who had been editor-in-chief of the liberal daily *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* before and after the war, and had done a belated Ph.D. on the newspaper as a (mostly economic) institution. After some time, however, the related press institute was relabelled the ‘Seminarium’ for the study of the means of communication. The historical aspects were first covered by Maarten Schneider, later succeeded by Joan Hemels.¹

In mass psychology and related fields, Baschwitz was succeeded by his former assistant Marten Brouwer. In this capacity, the latter came to head another newly founded ‘Seminarium’ for ‘Mass psychology, public opinion and propaganda’, which was soon relabelled the ‘Baschwitz Institute’. On the eve of his retirement, Brouwer briefly tried to refocus it on the emerging international and interdisciplinary field of ‘political psychology’.

But in Baschwitz’s wake the communication sciences had exploded throughout The Netherlands. There was one (Utrecht) and then more professional schools for journalists, and one for cinema and also television (Amsterdam). After the catholic university in Nijmegen, and the protestant (‘Free’) university in Amsterdam, most other major universities also took up communication studies in one form or another. The Institute for Theatre

¹ On the one hand the development of people’s communicative behaviour, on the other hand the development of thinking about it. Hemels also produced a long series of publications about the latter: from *De Journalistieke Eierdans* (1972) to ‘Kommunikationswissenschaft in den Niederlanden’ in Michael Meyen & Thomas Wiedemann (Hrsg., 2015), and a similar chapter in Stefanie Averbeck-Lietz (Hrsg. 2017).
(and Film) Studies within the Literary Faculty of Baschwitz’s own (municipal) University of Amsterdam morphed into a wide-ranging (Cultural) Media Studies program. Rotterdam and Groningen also started special post-graduate years for aspiring journalists.

So it was time to also bring Baschwitz’s legacy up to date. Content-wise, the nomination of the British Denis McQuail as a general professor of mass communication at the University of Amsterdam (tenure 1977-1997) brought a highly productive closer link-up with the entire Anglo-American world, where it had already become a field in its own right. He was a pioneer in the media ‘uses and gratifications’ theory, and published introductions and handbooks that became global references. As of 2010, his Mass Communication Theories (Sage) had sold 80,000 copies worldwide. In later studies, he detailed and filled in notions like media ‘performance’ and media ‘accountability’. Meanwhile, he had also helped co-found the European Journal of Communication.

Organization-wise, most of its re-founding and further expansion was patiently engineered by Jan van Cuilenburg (tenure 1988-2016). After the re-integration of the ‘press science’ and ‘mass psychology’ institutes, he supervised the introduction of a complete program for communication science (1992-3), the founding of the Amsterdam School of Communication Research ASCoR (1997), and finally the adoption of an entirely new Europe-wide approach to Bachelor and Masters programs in all fields. In 2005, the First European Communication Conference was held at the protestant ‘Free’ university in Amsterdam, underscoring the city’s key role.

The cluster of institutions at the former ‘municipal’ university, now University of Amsterdam, chose to honour both of its main founders. At one point, a special Kurt Baschwitz Chair was introduced for visiting professors, who also delivered a special Kurt Baschwitz Lecture. Later, the research school ASCoR introduced a Baschwitz Faculty ‘Article of the Year’ Award, and a Baschwitz Young Scholar ‘Article of the Year’ Award. Still later, ASCoR created a Denis McQuail Award, which made the winner a visiting McQuail Honorary Fellow, who also delivered a McQuail Lecture.

Today, ‘Communication and Media Studies’ at the University of Amsterdam have developed into the oldest, largest, and most successful cluster in its field in The Netherlands, and one of the major ones in continental Europe and number two in the latest authoritative QS ‘world university rankings by subject’. The ultimate result of the stubborn perseverance of a distraught Jewish exile who had been forced to flee Germany in 1933, who miraculously survived a transit camp and hiding from deportation during the war. Before finally realizing his dream of creating a true ‘press institute’, within the framework of a political and social faculty that he had helped found ...