



JAN PINBORG

APRIL 29, 1937 - SEPTEMBER 24, 1982

Kindness, honesty, rationality, combined with an unquenchable thirst for understanding and a permanent desire — indeed, a physical need — to be active made Jan Pinborg a great scholar, the motive force behind many projects, and an efficient administrator. The following data outline his academical career.

In 1962 he graduated in classical philology from the University of Copenhagen. Having completed his military service he held a position as research assistant at Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi 1964-1966. 1966-1973 he was assistant professor of classics at the University of Copenhagen. In 1973 he was appointed to a chair of classics at the same university. He became doctor philosophiae (Univ. of Cph.) in 1967, director of the Institute of Greek and Latin Medieval Philology in 1972, fellow of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in 1980. He was a member of the boards of Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale and of the Danish Society of Language and Literature from 1977, editor-in-chief of Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi from 1974, and of Grammatica Speculativa (1977 sqq.). Finally, he edited Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Age grec et latin from 1972 and was on the editorial boards of Classica et Mediaevalia and History and Philosophy of Logic from 1980, as well as being a member of the advisory committee of Vivarium from 1974.

Trained in both Greek and Latin, Pinborg decidedly preferred Latin. For all his work on the Aristotelian tradition he never read much of Aristotle in Greek. The way he came to know his Aristotle was the way of the medieval schoolmen, through Latin translations. Yet, he could use his Greek when this was needed. He was intimately familiar with Hellenistic and Late Ancient grammatical and philosophical sources and so managed to make a survey article on ancient Greek grammar into a significant contribution to the historiography of linguistics ("Classical Antiquity: Greece" from 1975; see bibliography below).

However, the article on ancient Greek grammar is exceptional, both because it is principally about Greek thought and because it is about Classical Antiquity. The major part of Pinborg's publications are editions of medieval texts and papers or books on purely medieval subjects. The history of Northern European universities was a subject to which he intermittently returned. But his main field of research was grammar and logic in the Middle Ages. He was introduced to the field by Heinrich Roos, one of the founders of *Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi* (CPhD). Already when an undergraduate student Pinborg became an important participant in that editorial project. Volume II from 1961 (the works of Martinus de Dacia) owes much to him, far more than is suggested by the one-line acknowledgment of his "collaboration précieuse" at the end of the preface. But such was the style in 1961.

Working for CPhD Pinborg became acquainted with modistic grammar, and this was to be his main subject through most of the 60s. In 1967 he published his doctoral dissertation, "Die Entwicklung der Sprachtheorie im Mittelalter", a monumental work which is not likely to become outdated for many years to come. The edition of Boethius de Dacia's "Modi Significandi", in its essentials finished before the dissertation, appeared in 1969.

In the late 60s Pinborg felt that he had had enough of modi significandi for a while, and he turned his attention to logic. Through H. Roos, whose background was Central European and Neo-Thomistic, Pinborg was well acquainted with the Neo-Thomistic approach to medieval philosophy. But this approach was not to be his own. His was deeply influenced by Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon linguistics and analytical philosophy. But at the same time he was a classical philologist, and classicists have a tradition of following the development of theories through time. So he embarked on an historical investigation of the development of medieval logic from the beginnings to the 15th century.

The few, but enthusiastic, students who attended his seminar on the history of logic and semantics during the spring term of 1968 treasure the memories of that exciting experience.

Prior to each session (but often very late) Pinborg produced hand-outs containing his own attempt to track the development of some topic during a certain period of time as well as primary sources to be read and discussed. Some of the texts were taken from printed books; many were his own transcriptions of the manuscripts. When the seminar was over, he had, in fact, made the first draft of the book that was to appear in 1972 under the title of "Logik und Semantik im Mittelalter".

Another publication whose history can be traced back to that seminar appeared in 1970, viz. "Studies in the Logical Writings attributed to Boethius de Dacia". Though very unpretentious in its appearance and aims, it has provoked much useful debate. In the bibliography below, "Studies ..." appears as the joint work of two persons, with Pinborg's name last. This is revealing of Pinborg's character. He invited an undergraduate student, his junior by nine years, to discuss the paper with him before publication. But besides talking and doing some sloppy proof-reading the student contributed but little to the paper — far less than the work that nine years earlier had earned Pinborg himself a one-line mention for "precious collaboration". He was a generous man and he knew how to start young people off on a scholarly career.

"Studies ..." marked the beginning of a decade characterized by a fruitful collaboration between Pinborg and his junior colleagues — his own former students and others, both Danes and foreigners who came to work in our institute (IGLM). "Studies" was a turning point in another respect, too. It was Pinborg's first major publication in English. He had realized that his previous use of German had restricted the circle of readers to an unacceptable degree. After 1970 he used English whenever there was no special reason to do otherwise. At first the change of language cost him much extra work, for he was by no means fluent in English. But his ability to handle the new vehicle of thought rapidly improved, and in the second half of the decade he could begin to reap the fruits of his labour.

Until the mid 70s the foreign scholars with whom he collaborated were Continental Europeans, for the most part. He was one

of the founding fathers of the European Symposia on Mediaeval Logic and Semantics, and a very successful organizer-in-chief of the third symposium, held in IGLM in 1975. The subject of the symposium was the thought of John Buridan. This choice reflected, among other things, a process which was shifting the focus of Pinborg's interest toward late medieval philosophy. After studying ancient philosophy in his undergraduate days he had moved to the modistic period. Then, in the late 60s, he made some excursions into the 12th century and the beginnings of medieval philosophy. But Ockham, his favourite philosopher, exercised a strong pull on him in the 70s, drawing him to the 14th century.

This pull towards the later Middle Ages was further strengthened in the second half of the 70s when he got into closer contact with the English-speaking world, and in particular with American historians of philosophy. In the summer of 1977 he taught paleography at Harvard. One pleasant result of this was that American scholars began to come to work in our institute. In the summer of 1979 he was again in the USA. This time to take part in the editing of the "Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy", a project to which he attached great importance. He hoped the book would be instrumental in bringing about a real change in the way medieval philosophy is normally presented in handbooks and in making the subject interesting to groups of people who until now have been convinced of its irrelevance.

Pinborg was back in the US in 1980 to teach at a Summer Institute on Medieval Philosophy at Cornell. He enjoyed it immensely, but also complained that he felt exhausted when it was over. The program was tightly packed. But it was not like Pinborg to feel so exhausted. In late 1980 a cancer was diagnosed and he underwent surgical treatment. He returned to work in early 1981, but some of the old vigour was gone. He tired too easily. The "History of Medieval Philosophy" of which he had conceived the general plan, the book that was scheduled to synthesize his many detailed insights, was never committed to the paper. In the summer of 1982 he went to New

Zealand to deliver a series of lectures originally planned for 1981. When he returned in late August he went directly to the hospital where he died on the 24th of September.

Next year, in 1983, the Institute of Greek and Latin Medieval Philology in Copenhagen can celebrate its 25th anniversary. It was created to shelter two editorial projects, *Monumenta Musicae Byzantinae* and *Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi*. It still does so. Right from the foundation IGLM has been internationally oriented; the international ties were multiplied in Pinborg's time as director of the Institute. The staff of IGLM would like Jan Pinborg's many friends abroad to know that we shall do our utmost to maintain the status of the Institute as an internationally oriented centre of research, in close touch with fellow-researchers all over the world, and always open to foreign visiting scholars who have a serious piece of work to do. If this can be achieved, it will be the finest tribute to the memory of Jan Pinborg.

Sten Ebbesen