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Niels Jørgen Green-Pedersen in memoriam

by *Sten Ebbesen*

Dr Green-Pedersen (October 20, 1942 – April 25, 2017) belonged to the group of scholars active at the University of Copenhagen's *Institute for Greek and Latin Medieval Philology* when this journal was founded in 1969 as the institute's mouthpiece, and between 1973 and 1982 he published eight articles and editions in *CIMAGL*, six of them entirely his own work, while two had been produced in collaboration with others.

Green-Pedersen studied classical philology at the University of Copenhagen, becoming *candidatus magisterii* (roughly equivalent to *MA*) in 1970. Several years later he also took the equivalent of a *BA* degree in philosophy.

Between 1970 and 1982 Green-Pedersen held temporary research positions at the Danish Society for Language and Literature (under whose aegis *Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi [CPhD]* was, and is, published) and at the University of Copenhagen, but as no permanent position was available he shifted to high school employment in 1982, teaching Greek, Latin, classical civilization, and philosophy until he retired in 2007.

The *CPhD* project had been started in 1946, vol. I had appeared in 1955, vol. II in 1961 and vol. III in 1963. In 1966 Jan Pinborg (1937-1982) was working on vol. IV, but there were several more volumes to be edited, and so the then editor-in-chief of *CPhD*, Heinrich Roos (1904-1977), recruited two students to assist with the editorial work, one of whom was Green-Pedersen, while the other was the present writer.

Green-Pedersen was assigned the job of collating manuscripts of Boethius of Dacia's *Quaestiones super librum Topicorum* (produced in Paris about 1270/75). He later advanced to becoming the editor of the text in

collaboration with Jan Pinborg. Their magnificent *editio princeps* appeared as *CPhD* VI.1 in 1976. The same year Boethius' *Opuscula* were published in *CPhD* VI.2 – this time Green-Pedersen was sole editor, and his exemplary editions of *De aeternitate mundi*, *De summo bono* and *De somniis* were a considerable improvement on the previous ones by Géza Sajó and Martin Grabmann. In 1973 Green-Pedersen also started work on an edition of Nicholas Drukken of Dacia's *Quaestiones super librum Priorum*, a Paris product from ca. 1340, but after having transcribed the main manuscript he had to put the project aside until the 1990s. The edition finally appeared in *CPhD* XII in 1997.

In the *CPhD* volumes Green-Pedersen's Christian names, *Niels Jørgen*, are given in the Latin form from which they are derived, *Nicolaus Georgius*. This has led to some confusion in the scholarly literature, not everyone realizing what vernacular forms underlie the Latin ones.

The work on Boethius of Dacia's *Topics* commentary made Green-Pedersen start a wider investigation of the medieval tradition for commenting on that Aristotelian work and on Manlius Boethius' *De topicis differentiis*. The first fruits of his studies were published in this journal in 1973 under the title 'On the Interpretation of Aristotle's *Topics* in the 13th Century', and several more publications followed, culminating in his monumental *The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages: The Commentaries on Aristotle's and Boethius' 'Topics'* from 1984, which the following year earned him the title of *dr. phil.* (corresponding to German *Dr. habil.*) at the University of Copenhagen.

Green-Pedersen was a very systematic scholar who valued thorough investigation of the source material over bold theories with only scant empirical support, so for *The Tradition of the Topics* he had scoured the libraries of the world for commentaries on Aristotle's *Topics* (he found 69) and Boethius' *De topicis differentiis* (25 found), all listed in an appendix with the appropriate information about authors, dates, editions (rarely available) and manuscripts. When examining a commentary, Green-

Pedersen in each case transcribed a number of passages in order to see how the commentator dealt with certain pre-selected themes, so that he could provide a well-documented history of the doctrinal development. Green-Pedersen had selected three main themes: (1) What is a *locus* (i.e. τόπος)?, (2) How does a *locus* function in arguments?, (3) What classes are the *loci* divided into? The book presented the results in such an impeccably clear way that now, more than thirty years after its publication, *The Tradition of the Topics* remains a work no scholar with an interest in medieval theories of topical reasoning can afford to neglect.

In the 1970s it was widely believed that the late-medieval theory of consequences (*consequentiae*) had grown out of the study of topics, as had been suggested by Otto Bird in a couple of papers from the early 1960s. The possible origin in a topics context was in itself an invitation for Green-Pedersen to look more carefully into the history of the theory of consequences, and an added incitement to do so came from the importance assigned to the theory by Nicholas Drukken in his questions on the *Prior Analytics*. In a series of essays and editions from the years 1980 to 1985 Green-Pedersen did a considerable amount of spade work to prepare proper foundations for a history of the medieval doctrine of consequences, and he was already able to present several important conclusions from his research in *The Tradition of the Topics*. It is still unclear where the cradle of the doctrine stood, but Green-Pedersen showed beyond dispute that there is next to nothing to support the notion that it stood in the class-rooms where topics were discussed.

Except for a small survey article from 1987, Green-Pedersen published no more studies or editions concerned with topical reasoning until he retired from his teaching job. Then he returned to the love of his youth and published John Buridan's questions on Aristotle's *Topics* (2008) and the same author's treatise *De locis* from his *Summulae* (2013). But he also in his retirement took up a very different line of work, translating classical Greek tragedies into Danish: Euripides' *Alcestis*, Sophocles' *The Women of Trachis* and Euripides' *Hercules*. The translations were primarily meant

for use in Danish high schools, where classical civilization is an obligatory subject for all pupils, and they were, of course, inspired by the translator's own experiences as a high school teacher. His producing them after the end of his teaching career bears witness both to his love of ancient poetry and to a wish to continue helping new generations get acquainted with it.

Green-Pedersen was a very shy man who did everything possible not to draw attention to himself. He only participated in a couple of international conferences in his youth, so few foreign scholars have known him personally, except –of course– for those who have spent time in Copenhagen; yet, his name will live among students of medieval philosophy for many a decade to come.

Niels Jørgen Green-Pedersen's publications

- 1973 'On the Interpretation of Aristotle's Topics in the 13th Century' *CIMAGL* 9: 11-46.
- 1974 'William of Champeaux on Boethius's Topics according to Orléans Bibl. Mun. 266', *CIMAGL* 13: 13-30.
- 1975 w. K.M. Fredborg, L.O. Nielsen & J. Pinborg, 'The Commentary on 'Priscianus Maior' Ascribed to Robert Kilwardby', *CIMAGL* 15: 1⁺-20⁺ + 1-146.
- 1976 w. J. Pinborg, ed., *Boethii Daci Opera: Topica*, Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi VI.1, DSL/Gad: Copenhagen.
- ed., *Boethii Daci Opera: Opuscula*, Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi VI.2, DSL/Gad: Copenhagen.
- 'The Summulae of John Buridan, Tractatus VI De locis', in: J. Pinborg, ed., *The Logic of John Buridan. Acts of the 3rd European Symposium on Medieval Logic and Semantics, Copenhagen 16.- 21. November 1975*, Museum Tusculanum: Copenhagen, 121-138.
- 1977 'The Discussions about the Status of the Loci Dialectici in Works from the Middle of the Twelfth Century', *CIMAGL* 20: 38-78.
- 'The Doctrine of 'Maxima Propositio' and 'Locus Differentia' in Commentaries from the 12th century on Boethius' 'Topics', *Studia Mediewistyczne* 18: 125-163.
- 1978 w. J. Pinborg, 'Radulphi Britonis Quaestiones super libro Topicorum Boethii & the Sophism 'Omnis homo est omnis homo'', *CIMAGL* 26: I-VIII + 1-121.
- 1980 'Two Early Anonymous Tracts on Consequences', *CIMAGL* 35: 1-28.
- 'Walter Burley's "De consequentiis". An Edition', *Franciscan Studies* 40: 102-166.
- 1981 'Nicolaus Drukken de Dacia's Commentary on the *Prior Analytics* – with Special Regard to the Theory of Consequences', *CIMAGL* 37: 42-69.

- 1982 'Bradwardine (?) on Ockham's Doctrine of Consequences. An Edition', *CIMAGL* 42: 85-150.
- 1984 *The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages: The Commentaries on Aristotle's and Boethius' 'Topics'*, Philosophia Verlag: München – Wien.
- '[Review of] Klaus Jacobi, *Die Modalbegriffe in den logischen Schriften des Wilhelm von Shyreswood*', *History and Philosophy of Logic* 5: 234-236.
- 1985 'Early British Treatises on Consequences', in P.O. Lewry, ed., *The Rise of British Logic. Acts of the Sixth European Symposium on Medieval Logic and Semantics, Balliol College, Oxford, 19-24 June 1983*. Papers in Mediaeval Studies 7, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies: Toronto, 285-307.
- 1987 'The Topics in Medieval Logic', *Argumentation* 1: 407-417.
- 1997 ed., *Nicolai Drukken de Dacia Opera: Quaestiones supra Librum Priorum*, Corpus Philosophorum Danicorum Medii Aevi XII: VII-XXII + 1-232, DSL/Gad: Copenhagen.
- 2001 trl., *Boethius de Dacia. Verdens Evighed - Det højeste gode - Drømme*. Det Lille Forlag: Frederiksberg [Danish translation of *De aeternitate mundi, De summo bono* and *De somniis*].
- 2008 ed., *Johannes Buridanus, Quaestiones Topicorum*, Artistarium 12, Brepols: Turnhout.
- 2010 trl., Euripides, *Alkestis*, Systime: Århus.
- 2013 ed., *Johannes Buridanus, Summulae De Locis Dialecticis*. Artistarium 10-6, Brepols: Turnhout.
- 2014 trl., Sofokles, *Kvinderne i Trachis - Herakles' død*, Systime: Århus.
- Forthcoming: trl., Euripides, *Herakles*.