
Wien, 1.9. 2015

Im Namen des Vorstandes

Friedrich Stadler

(Wissenschaftlicher Leiter/Vorstand)

The Institute Vienna Circle is sad to announce the passing away of Professor Jaakko Hintikka in Porvoo (Finland). He was a long term member, speaker, and advisor of the IVC. His impressive lifework and his extraordinary contributions to the history and philosophy of science will remain as an intellectual testimony of. His death is an irreplaceable loss for the scientific community. Our condolences go to his wife and his family.

Vienna, September 1, 2015

Friedrich Stadler

(Director/Head)

Obituaries by Ilkka Niiniluoto and Sami Pihlström:

It is my sad duty to tell the news that the Finnish logician and philosopher Jaakko Hintikka died at the age of 86 after a brief illness on August 12, 2015. In the previous week, he participated actively as a speaker in the CLMPS and LC at the University of Helsinki, including the congress banquet on last Friday.

Jaakko Hintikka was born on 12 January 1929 in the Helsinki county (Vantaa) in Finland. He studied mathematics (with Rolf Nevanlinna) and philosophy (with Georg Henrik von Wright) at the University of Helsinki since 1947, and defended his doctoral dissertation on distributive normal forms in 1953. After his Ph.D. studies he worked as junior fellow at Harvard University in 1956-59, and became in 1957 (independently of Stig Kanger) the founder of possible world semantics. In 1962 he published his groundbreaking work Knowledge and Belief on epistemic logic. In 1959 Hintikka was appointed, at the age of 30, professor of Practical Philosophy at the University of Helsinki. In 1964 he became also professor of philosophy at Stanford University which - with Patrick Suppes and Dagfinn Föllesdal - was one of the leading centers of philosophy of science and philosophical logic. Hintikka’s new interests included inductive logic and semantic information. He shared his time between Stanford
and Helsinki until the end of the 1970s. In 1965 Hintikka started his work with D. Reidel’s Publishing Company (later Kluwer Academic Publishers) in Holland as the editor-in-chief of the journal Synthese and the book series Synthese Library. This activity, which has continued until 2002, made Hintikka the most influential editor of philosophical works in the English speaking world.

In 1970 Hintikka was appointed to a Research Professorship in the Academy of Finland which allowed him to establish a research group of younger Finnish scholars working mainly in logic, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, and history of philosophy. As a teacher and supervisor, Hintikka has been highly influential though the richness of his new ideas and research initiatives. Many of the former students of Hintikka have been appointed to chairs in philosophy (Risto Hilpinen, Raimo Tuomela, Juhani Pietarinen, Ilkka Niiniluoto, Simo Knuuttila, Veikko Rantala, Juha Manninen, Lauri Carlson, Esa Saarinen, Matti Sintonen, Gabriel Sandu).

In 1978 Jaakko Hintikka divorced his first wife Soili and married an American philosopher Merrill Bristow Provence (1939-87). In 1978 Jaakko and Merrill were appointed at the Florida State University in Tallahassee. After Merrill Hintikka’s death in 1987 Hintikka married a Finnish philosopher Ghita Holmström. In 1990 Hintikka became professor of philosophy at Boston University and moved to Marlborough, MA. He retired from Boston in 2014 and moved back to Finland.

Besides his activities in research, teaching, and publication, Hintikka served in many important positions in international organizations, among others vice president of Association for Symbolic Logic in 1968-71, vice president of the Division of Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science (DLMPS/IUHPS) in 1971-75 and president in 1975, president of the Charles S. Peirce Society in 1997, and the chairman of the organizing committee of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy in 1998. As a proof of the appreciation of Hintikka’s work, a volume dedicated to him in the Library of Living Philosophers was published in 2006.

Hintikka’s publications cover an exceptionally wide range of topics. During his career in more than 60 years he has published about 40 books or monographs, edited 20 books, and authored more than 300 scholarly articles in international journals or collections. His main works deal with mathematical logic (proof theory, infinitary logics, IF-logic), intensional logic and propositional attitudes, philosophy of logic and mathematics, philosophy of language (game-theoretical semantics, quantifiers, anaphora), philosophy of science (interrogative model of inquiry), epistemology, and history of philosophy (Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Peirce, Frege, Wittgenstein).

I Ilkka Niiniluoto
CLMPS 2015, Chair of the Local Organizing Committee
University of Helsinki

Jaakko Hintikka (January 12, 1929 – August 12, 2015)

Jaakko Hintikka, one of the most distinguished philosophers in the world, died in Porvoo on August 12, 2015, at the age of 86.

Hintikka studied philosophy at the University of Helsinki in the late 1940s and early 1950s, completing his doctoral degree in 1953 with the thesis, Distributive Normal Forms in the Calculus of Predicates. He was a Junior Fellow at Harvard University in 1956-1959. In 1959, he was appointed to the Chair of Practical Philosophy at the University of Helsinki. In addition to the University of Helsinki, he worked as a professor at Stanford University, the Academy of Finland, Florida State University, and finally (since 1990) at Boston University, retiring in 2014.
Even though he was primarily settled in the United States for several decades, he never lost contact with his home country and home university; he continuously led research projects in Finland and trained an entire generation of philosophers, to the extent that a couple of decades ago almost all Finnish philosophy professors were his former students. Hintikka was by any imaginable criteria one of the most influential Finnish academics of all times.


In 2006, Hintikka received the most prestigious recognition a philosopher can get, a volume of his own in the famous series, Library of Living Philosophers, thus joining thinkers like Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein, John Dewey, Rudolf Carnap, Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Popper, Willard Van Orman Quine, and his own teacher Georg Henrik von Wright. In 2005, he was awarded the Rolf Schock Prize in logic and philosophy “for his pioneering contributions to the logical analysis of modal concepts, in particular the concepts of knowledge and belief”, and in 2011, he received the Barwise Prize from the American Philosophical Association. Hintikka also received a number of honorary doctorates from several universities and was an honorary member of several academic societies. He was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the Lion of Finland in 2011.

Hintikka was one of the most important and original philosophers of the latter half of the twentieth century (and the beginning of the twenty-first); with his contributions to logic, philosophy of language, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, and related areas, he to a significant degree shaped the field itself, and quite literally created novel approaches and entire research orientations.

Jaakko Hintikka’s last academic affiliation was his Honorary Fellowship at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Upon returning to Finland in 2010, he arrived at the Helsinki Collegium first as a Distinguished Visiting Fellow; he was later appointed as a permanent Honorary Fellow in 2011. He also donated his massive scholarly library to the Helsinki University Library. Missing its Honorary Fellow, the Helsinki Collegium remains deeply grateful for having had the privilege of hosting the academic research conducted by Jaakko Hintikka during his final active years 2010-2015.

Sami Pihlström
(former Director of the Helsinki Collegium, 2009-2015; Professor of Philosophy of Religion, University of Helsinki)