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Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Aarhus University
Charles University

Partner Organizations

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Evangelische Kirche in Mitteldeutschland
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THE HISTORY OF HUMAN FREEDOM AND DIGNITY
IN WESTERN CIVILIZATION

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The History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization

In modern democracies, citizens constitutionally have the right to think, believe, and express themselves freely about political, religious, and other matters without fearing official retribution; they want to participate dynamically in policymaking processes and not be subject to other political authorities than those which they have chosen freely and democratically, nor to religious or moral norms that they have not freely accepted. Thus, the idea of human freedom and dignity is fundamental to the concept of human rights. These ideas and that of individual autonomy are also fundamental to the welfare state model on which most European countries build their societies.

The History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization is an Initial Training Network (ITN) established by six universities and nine non-academic partner organizations across Europe and engaging scholars and PhD students from various disciplines. The ITN will trace the roots and transformations of the human values of dignity and freedom in theological and philosophical traditions, among other things with the aim of understanding modern debates and conflicts about these values. Their long history has been characterized by a continuous battle between two theological and philosophical

traditions going back to Origen of Alexandria and Augustine of Hippo, respectively.

Origen saw humans as free, valuable, and dignified beings, while Augustine saw them as predestined, sinful, and bound to servitude. The project's research will continuously circle this battle between the opposing negative and positive views on humanity that we encounter in various contexts from antiquity to modern times. Thereby, the project will raise awareness of how ancient philosophical and religious tenets still shape political, moral, and anthropological categories and modes of thinking as well as principles of human conduct.

Research Projects

Michael Raubach	<i>Transhumanism, Freedom, and the Universalist Theology of Jaques Ellul</i>
Laurel Lied	<i>Origen reception in Danish and German Pietistic devotional literature</i>
Johannes Renders	<i>The values of individual freedom and dignity in contemporary religious movements</i>
Elisa Zocchi	<i>The reception of Origenian ideas in modern Catholic theology</i>

Elisa Bellucci	<i>Debate on human freedom and dignity in the German strand of Radical Pietism – The sources of Eleonora Petersen's ideas</i>
Ilaria Scarponi	<i>The reception of Origen from Augustine until Eriugena</i>
Andrea Bianchi	<i>Origenian influence on Dutch Arminianism</i>
Kristian Bunkenborg	<i>Human freedom and dignity in the late 18th-century debates on revelation, religion and the human</i>
Karen Felter	<i>Origen's ideas of human freedom and dignity in 17th century England</i>
Giovanni Tortoriello	<i>A new vision of mankind: Pico della Mirandola's thought</i>
Morten Koch Møller	<i>The theological anthropology of Origen and Augustine</i>
Joshua Roe	<i>Origenism, Pietism, and Kant's religious philosophy</i>
Renze Klamer	<i>The values of individual freedom and dignity in modern organizations</i>
Claire Trillot	<i>Origen's influence on Bernard of Clairvaux</i>