



Human Freedom and Dignity - Origen and political theology

Seminar in Aarhus 05.04 -07.04

Program Friday 5th of April

18.00-18.15: Welcome

18.15-19.30: Ben Ryan: *Populism, values and identity: religious and political engagement in contemporary Europe*

After decade of relative neglect the twin dangers of extremist Islamic terrorism and the rise of nationalist groups and parties have brought questions of identity and religion back into the heart of contemporary political debate. This paper looks at the extent to which such fears are justified, and the paradoxical role that religious identity and discourse plays in both reinforcing and potentially undermining the Western liberal democratic political system.

19.30 - Dinner

Program Saturday 6th of April

9.00-10.15: Alfons Fürst: *Nomos and Natural Law in Origen's Commentary on Romans*

Origen developed his concept of natural law in the Commentary on Romans, above all relying on Paul's sentences about it in Romans 2:14sq., and in his dispute with the Platonic philosopher Celsus. Within the broad range of meanings of the Greek term *nómos* Origen stressed the practical dimension of *nómos* as obliging custom, tradition and law. As to the notion of nature, he conceived it not as fixed substance but as dynamic network of interrelated self-determined beings who define their nature by their actions. Based on these notions, his concept of natural law is a law of reason and freedom. The aim of the article is to describe these pillars of Origen's idea of natural law which is a heavily understudied topic in Origenian research and not at all known in general displays of the history of natural law concepts.

10.15-10:30: Coffee

10.30-11.45: Christian Hengsteman: *Divine Goodness and the Sources of Political Power: Origenist Politics in Late Antiquity and Early Modernity*

Origen's *Contra Celsum* is a major work of western political philosophy. In response to Celsus' allegations against Christianity as a subversive religion inimical to the Roman body politic, Origen restates the Platonic conviction of God's goodness as the only legitimate source of all political power. His notion of universal a priori normativity as the *sine qua non* of all political agreement informs the Cambridge Platonists' rejection of Thomas Hobbes' and Baruch de Spinoza's contractualism at the dawn of the modern age. The present paper reconstructs Origen's and the Cambridge Origenists' doctrine of political power, assessing its lasting historical and systematic significance.

11.45-12.45: Lunch

12.45-14.00: Isidoros Katsos: *Human Dignity and Freedom in Two Cappadocian Treatises On the Creation of Man*

Human dignity and freedom are the two constitutional pillars of modern rights serving as matrix for the generation of particular rights and freedoms. The relation of Christian theology to human rights, however, is ambivalent. While the Western Church, drawing mainly from the Augustinian and the Thomist tradition, assumes the compatibility of human rights to the Christian doctrine, the Eastern Church, drawing mainly from the Basilian and the Justinian tradition, assumes the possible incompatibility between Orthodox theology and the logic of rights. This paper aims to revisit the theology of the image in the Eastern Church fathers focusing on two Cappadocian treatises *On the creation of Man*. If the argument is correct, it allows us to also rethink the relation of the Eastern patristic tradition to contemporary rights.

14.00-14.45: Christian Pelz: *"Enlighten yourselves with the light of knowledge!" Origen's political appeal explained by Immanuel Kant.*

The 'political' nature of Origen's theology explained by passages from Origen's *De principiis* and his commentaries on the Gospel of John and the Song of Songs. These political aspects of Origen's theology can be enlightened by Immanuel Kant's philosophy.

14.45-15.15: Coffee

15.15-16.30: Zaynab El Bernoussi: *DNA Testing and Islamic Law: An Example of a Bioethical Issue in Morocco*

A child born out of wedlock is typically not entitled to paternity recognition in Morocco. In an unprecedented move, the First Instance Family Court in Tangiers recognized the familial relationship connecting a father to his biological daughter. The court also required the man to pay for the material and moral harms caused to the child through her mother from denial of paternity or familial relations. The defendant appealed the judgment.

On October 9, 2017, the Tangiers Court of Appeals overturned the First Instance Court decision, rejecting the DNA tests and any recognition of familial relation. The court also invalidated the lower court's use of international conventions, explaining that the child is so foreign to her father that the possibility of their future marriage would not be overruled.

16.30-17.45: Peter Lodberg: *Anthropological perspectives in Palestinian theology.*

The conflict in Israel/Palestine has contributed to formulate a Palestinian theology. It wants to be local, contextual, and ecumenical. One of the leading Palestinian theologian, Mitri Raheb, has developed a theology of culture that involves an awareness of Palestinian identity as an important element in being a Christian in a context dominated by Islam and Judaism. Peter Lodberg will try to show some of the anthropological perspectives in Palestinian theology and discuss its relevance today.

18.30: Dinner

Program Sunday 7th of April

9.30-12.00 (latest): Final discussion and planning of future activities

Information

Place: School of Culture and Society - Systematic Theology, Jens Chr. Skous Vej 3 building 1453, 415 8000 Aarhus

Date: 05.04.2019-07.04.2019

Registration: Please register by sending an email to Margrethe Nielsen at mkbn@cas.au.dk

Deadline for registration: 29.03.2019