

5 available PhD positions within H2020 ITN-HHFDWC-676258 – The History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization

The Marie Curie ITN HHFDWC (“The History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization”) – a collaboration between six universities and nine non-academic partner organizations across Europe – re-opens the calls for 5 full-time, three-year Early Stage Researcher (ESR) positions to begin August 1, 2016, at the latest. The ITN offers an attractive salary, an interdisciplinary environment, and an innovative training program that allows the ESRs to obtain specialist knowledge of a specific research topic as well as transferable skills that can be used in non-academic institutions.

Project description

The research project will trace the historical roots and transformations of the modern conception of the human being and the human values of dignity and freedom, especially in theological and philosophical traditions. In modern western societies, the ideal human being has the right to think, believe, and express itself freely without fearing retribution and to be treated as an autonomous and dignified individual. But such a conception is not shared by all – and never was. Its long history has been formed through 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 will continuously circle around this battle between the negative and positive views on humanity that we can encounter in various contexts from antiquity to modern times. By unlocking the patterns of reception they, in turn, can be used as a hermeneutical key to understanding later, modern debates about human freedom, free will, and dignity. 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.

Requirements

Before initiating the program, eligible candidates must have an internationally recognized Master’s or an equivalent degree which would formally entitle them to embark on a doctorate, in theology, history, philosophy, classics, religious history, or a related field. They must have less than four years of research experience after their candidate degree. The selection committee will seek gender equality among the recruited ESRs, and researchers can be of any nationality. However, eligible candidates have not resided more than 12 of the last 36 months in the country where the PhD is located for which they apply. Moreover, ESRs will complete secondments with one of the nine non-academic partners as well as at one of the other European universities as part of the training activities. Applicants should demonstrate evidence of effective communication skills in English, both written and oral. If further skills are required or advantageous to complete a subproject, this is mentioned under the individual project descriptions above.

Selection is based on the applicants’ academic skills and the relevance of their research experience, their ability to undertake the training activities, as well as on the expected impact of

the proposed training on the researchers' careers. Personal skills and other types of experience, such as pro-activity, participation in community activities, and capacity for teamwork, are also taken into account.

The candidates who are awarded a fellowship must commence their PhD program on August 1, 2016, at the latest. The salary will include social security and be composed of living and mobility allowances and a family allowance where appropriate, as outlined in the Marie-Curie Grant Agreement and Horizon 2020 - Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions Work-Program 2014/15 (see

http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/wp/2014_2015/main/h2020-wp1415-msca_en.pdf).

Applications

Applications for the PhD fellowships should be submitted to Birgitte Bøgh, bb@cas.au.dk. Before submitting your application, please read more about the project on www.itn-humanfreedom.eu where you will also find a guide for applicants.

One or more of the ESR positions can be applied for. Applicants must enclose a diploma or documentation for submitting his/her Master's thesis (or equivalent) for assessment by the deadline for application and must have been awarded the degree before starting the PhD program. Each application (even if more positions are applied for) must contain the relevant personal data, a CV (no longer than 2 A4-pages), proof of English language skills, a transcript of grades, a Master's degree diploma (or equivalent) or evidence of its completion before initiating the program, as well as a project description not exceeding two A4 pages. This description should include an explanation of your motivation for applying for this particular project and outline how the relevant research project is envisaged.

Deadline for applications: May 2, 2016, at 23.59 CET

After the submission deadline, two suitable candidates for each subproject will be preselected by a consortium committee, and their applications will be forwarded to the relevant universities. From this point on, the short-listed candidates will follow the local application procedures until a contract is signed.

Overview of available PhD projects

The ITN re-opens the calls for the following PhD projects:

3. Origen and Bernard of Clairvaux

This research project focuses on the theological anthropology of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Bernard was firmly embedded in the Augustinian theological tradition, but Origen's ideas also seem to have influenced Bernard's views on human freedom, e.g., via his optimistic Christology and doctrine of justification. The project thus aims, first, to detect the influences of Origen on Bernard's anthropology. Second, it will distil the impact of Bernard's theology on later debates.

Location: University of Kent, England

The ESR will be affiliated to the Centre of Early Christianity and Its Reception. Knowledge of Greek and Latin will be an advantage. Main supervisor will be Professor Dr. Karla Pollmann, who can be contacted for further information via k.f.l.pollmann@kent.ac.uk.

7. The debate on human freedom and dignity in the German strand of Radical Pietism

This research project seeks to explore the anthropological debates on human dignity and freedom in the vicinity of 1700 based on the scholarly networks that formed around Johanna Elenora (1644-1724) and her husband, Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649-1727) who are generally described as Radical Pietists. The notion of apokatastasis, among others to have been borrowed from the theological teachings of Origen, had been introduced into these debates by the Petersens. Borrowing from the rationalist philosophy of Leibniz as well as from the Jewish and the Christian Cabala, at the same time, influenced by the theosophical currents as well as the early Pietism inaugurated by Philipp Jakob Spener in the Frankfurt environs, these debates provided an innovative counterpoint in the anthropological discourse of the prevailing confessional denominations.

Location: Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany

The ESR will be employed at the Protestant Theological Faculty. MLU will offer to the researcher the possibility to enroll as doctoral student and benefit from training curricula and activities related to such enrolled PhD students. For further details see the description of the International Graduate Academy of MLU: <http://www.ingra.uni-halle.de/?lang=en>

A copy of the diploma should be attached to the application or handed in later as soon as possible. Knowledge of Latin and German and expertise in the history of theology, philosophy and religion of the 17th and 18th centuries will be an advantage. Main supervisor will be Friedemann Stengel, who can be contacted for further information via friedemann.stengel@izea.uni-halle.de. Disabled persons being equally qualified as non-disabled will be preferred. Women are encouraged to apply for the position.

9. Human freedom and dignity in late 18th-century debates on revelation, religion, and the human

In exploring the theological and philosophical controversies of the 1770s, this project centers on the notions of reason and revelation, history and religion, as well as the anthropology of humankind. As invoked by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and others, these controversies played a crucial role in the formulation of the enlightened concepts of human autonomy and free will, which became highly influential in articulating a modern understanding of humanity. With Lessing as its point of departure, the project focuses on these debates in the second half of 18th century and beyond in the transcultural impact of the German Enlightenment.

Location: Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany

The ESR will be employed at the Protestant Theological Faculty. MLU will offer to the researcher the possibility to enroll as doctoral student and benefit from training curricula and activities related to such enrolled PhD students. For further details see the description of the International Graduate Academy of MLU: <http://www.ingra.uni-halle.de/?lang=en>

A copy of the diploma should be attached to the application or handed in later as soon as possible. Knowledge of Latin and German and of the history of theology, philosophy, and religion of the 18th century will be an advantage. Main supervisor will be Professor Daniel Cyranka, who can be contacted for further information via daniel.cyranka@theologie.uni-halle.de. Disabled persons being equally qualified as non-disabled will be preferred. Women are encouraged to apply for the position.

10. Origenism, Pietism, and Kant's religious philosophy

The aim of this subproject is to investigate the possible interconnections between Origenism, Pietism, and Kant's religious philosophy of autonomy and human dignity. Kant's main anthropological ideas as expressed within the metaphysical framework of his transcendental philosophy and in his *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* (1793) are – notwithstanding the differences between their metaphysical frameworks – in some traces surprisingly similar to those of Origen, but he never mentions him, and he has not read him. It is therefore necessary to look for ideas and concepts of freedom during the 17th and 18th centuries that might be in the background of Kant's own development as a philosopher.

Theologians, philosophers, and historians who are interested in the history of ideas are encouraged to apply for this project.

Location: Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany

The ESR's main place of work will be the Origen Research Centre at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Münster. Main supervisor will be Professor Alfons Fürst, who can be contacted for further information via afuerst@uni-muenster.de. The University of Münster is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to increasing the proportion of women academics. Consequently, we actively encourage applications from women. Female candidates with equivalent qualifications and academic achievements will be preferentially considered within the framework of the legal possibilities. We also welcome applications from candidates with severe disabilities. Disabled candidates with equivalent qualifications will be preferentially considered.

12. Origen and the modern Protestant tradition

This project will focus on how, where, and to which degree the modern Protestant tradition has been inspired by Origen to argue for individual freedom and value by rejecting pre-determinism. The most important theologians to be investigated in this respect are Karl Barth,

Eberhard Jüngel, and Jürgen Moltmann, but a number of other Protestants have followed in their footsteps. The project will also engage with the question whether the modern protestant embrace of the idea of universal salvation and the rejection of pre-determinism necessarily led to ideas of individual freedom, or if they were rather understood as a loss of freedom.

Location: Aarhus University, Denmark

The PhD student's main place of work will be at the School of Culture and Society, and he/she will be affiliated with the PhD program Theology, History of Ideas and Philosophy. The ideal candidate possesses German reading skills. Main supervisor will be Professor Anders-Christian Jacobsen, who can be contacted for further information via alj@cas.au.dk. The PhD fellow will be employed as a PhD student at the Faculty of Arts and enrolled at the Graduate School, Arts (<http://phd.au.dk/gradschools/arts/>) in accordance with the Ministerial Order on the PhD degree program at the universities:

<http://talent.au.dk/phd/arts/rulesandforms/thephddegreeprogramme/>

Please see this page for terms of employment (section 6.1.4 in the agreement and enclosure 5 in the protocol): <http://talent.au.dk/phd/arts/rulesandforms/thephddegreeprogramme/>

* * *

For further information on the ITN, please see www.itn-humanfreedom.eu, or contact the supervisors of each subproject (see above) or the project coordinator Birgitte Bøgh via bb@cas.au.dk or +45 50 56 54 66.