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How to cite this publication:

Jacobsen, A-C. (2019). Themenheft: Some body or no body? Studies in Origen's theological anthropology Introduction. *Zeitschrift fuer Antikes Christentum*, 23(1), 1-3.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/zac-2019-0000>

Publication metadata

Title:	Themenheft: Some body or no body? Studies in Origen's theological anthropology Introduction
Author(s):	Anders-Christian Jacobsen
Journal:	Zeitschrift fuer Antikes Christentum
DOI/Link:	10.1515/zac-2019-0000
Document version:	Publisher's PDF (Version of Record)

The final publication is available at www.degruyter.com.

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Anders-Christian Jacobsen*

Introduction

<https://doi.org/10.1515/zac-2019-0000>

The articles in this special issue of ZAC all originate from a research seminar on Origen's theological anthropology held at *The Department of Theology* at Aarhus University in February 2018. The seminar came into being as an addition to the EU funded Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN) titled *The History of Human Freedom and Dignity in Western Civilization*. This project is a research collaboration between six universities and nine non-academic partner organizations across Europe. The project will trace the historical roots and transformations of the modern conception of humans as dignified and free beings, especially as met in theological and philosophical traditions. The project has two major aims: To train the doctoral students in the project and to investigate the philosophical and theological traditions behind the modern Western conception of humans as free, valuable, and dignified beings, and how these traditions developed chronologically and geographically. The network will focus on the reception and assimilation of the theological ideas expounded by the church father Origen from third century Alexandria. He argued, among other things, for human freedom, dignity, and capacity to master sin, but his views lost to those of Origen's mighty opponent – Augustine of Hippo – whose conception of humans was based on the doctrine of original sin, and who emphasized a predetermined fate, no free will, and human servitude (cf. <http://itn-humanfreedom.eu/> [accessed December 4th 2018]).

During its existence, the project has fortunately grown and attracted the interest of scholars, and additional activities such as this research seminar were established. As one of the senior members of the EU project, I am very thankful for experiencing the interest and support this has received from the scholarly community surrounding it. This expression of gratitude includes also and not least the editors of ZAC who invited us to publish the contribution to the seminar in this special issue.

The articles all deal with Origen's anthropology, but in different ways and with different aspects of his anthropology. The largest group of articles has in one way or the other their focus on Origen's understanding of the human body.

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This theme has been and still is an important topic in Origen research because his understanding of the human body is the key to understanding some of the most basic theological issues such as the creation, salvation and perfection of human beings. It can thus be argued that Origen's understanding of the human body reflects his theology as such. Fernando Solér shows in his article "The Theological Use of Eating and Drinking Metaphors in Origen's *De Principiis*" how Origen makes use of images of human being's eating and drinking to understand their physical and biological constitution and how he uses eating and drinking metaphorically to explain human beings' spiritual existence. Lavinia Cerioni writes about "Bodily Souls? Paradoxical Bodies in Origen's Theology of Progress." Cerioni discusses the ontological status of the human bodies in the progressive process of human beings towards their eschatological goal. Cerioni claims that human beings will have a "corporeal form" (εἶδος) in the eschatological fulfillment. Slightly differently I argue in my contribution ("The nature, function, and destiny of the human body—Origen's interpretation of 1 Cor 15") that Origen maintains that human beings will have a spiritual body after the resurrection, but that this spiritual body will finally disappear at the end of the human beings' progression when they reach perfection. Two of the articles concentrate on later receptions of Origen's understanding of the nature of the human body after the resurrection. Katarina Pålsson writes about "Angelic humans, glorious flesh: Jerome's reception of Origen's teachings on the resurrection body." Pålsson shows how Jerome positions himself in the so-called Origenist controversy by constructing Origen as a heretic, while at the same time, preserving Origenist ideas about the resurrection of the body. Maria Fallica shows in her contribution "*Quodammodo transfiguratum est in animum*: Erasmus' doctrine of the resurrection of the body and its Origenian roots" that Erasmus is relying on Origen when he develops his own position about the resurrection of the body. Thus, these articles provide important insights on how Origen conceived the human body at different stages in the progress of the human being from creation to consummation, and how Origen's ideas have been received at two important stages in the history of Christian theology. Origen's conviction that human beings are participating in a process from creation to consummation is also the premise for Fabian Tilling's article "It is right to keep the secret of a king" (Tobit 12:7)—the King's secret as a metaphor for the *mysterium Dei* in Origen." Secrecy is thus a way to control and steer human progress so that the progress is orderly and does not happen too fast. To keep the secret of the King (God) is to protect human beings from knowledge, which is too advanced for them at their present level. The idea that humans must progress towards God and their own perfection in God is based on Origen's metaphysics of freedom. Christian Hengstermann shows in his article "Being as Motion—The First Principles of Origen's Ontology of Freedom" that *good* and *being* are equiva-

lents in Origen's Christian philosophy. However, according to Origen, being is not static, but instead freedom to move towards the better. Thus freedom, being and progress or movement are closely connected in Origen's philosophical theology. On this background, the concept of natural law also finds its place in Origen's theology and philosophy as the expression of human beings' possibility to distinguish between good and evil and thus to progress in freedom towards the perfection in God. This is the theme of Anne Achternkamp's article "Natural Law in Origen's Anthropology." Being the editor of this special issue of ZAC, it is my hope that these articles can help shed more light on these difficult aspects of Origen's theology and philosophy.