

The Ways of Virtue. The Ethica Section in Wolfenbüttel and the History of Ethics in Early Modern Europe

Initiative: Freigeist-Fellowships

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This project aims to provide a new interpretation of early modern ethics and its role in shaping European culture. It is based on the claim that early modernity was not the age of the demise of virtue, as is commonly argued, but of its renewed vigour. The ways in which virtue was implemented into early modern society, and how 'traditional' models of virtue ethics reacted to the fundamental changes that occurred at the time will be investigated. The main source for this research is the Ethica section in the book collection of duke August the Younger (1579-1666), preserved in today's Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. A close study of the section, including treatises as well as emblem books, poetry, narrative literature, and drama, will help to redefine the canon of ethical works in early modernity. Shifting away from a narrow focus on ethics as a philosophical discipline, this project offers an interdisciplinary study of the larger patterns of education, regulation, and cultivation that informed early modern culture and society. It is also meant to generate a fruitful confrontation with new approaches in contemporary ethics such as moral psychology and anthropology.

Projektbeteiligte

Dr. Matthias Roick

Universität Göttingen

Theologische Fakultät

Kirchengeschichte

Göttingen