



Giovanni Pontano and the Renaissance Concept of Prudence

Matthias Roick

Among the moral and political treatises of Giovanni Pontano, his „De prudentia“ holds a special place. Unfortunately, it has not attracted the attention it deserves among scholars of Renaissance humanism due to its mainly „Aristotelian“ character, perceived as „backward“ in relation to Machiavelli’s „forward looking“ concept of prudence. Based on a reading of „De prudentia“, I will argue that we have to perceive Pontano’s Aristotelianism in a different way, as a humanist rewriting of Aristotelian moral and political thought. From this point of view, Pontano rather stands at the beginning of a new Aristotelian tradition which heavily influenced moral and political life in the early modern period, and not at the end of a classical tradition soon to be superseded by the Florentine secretary.

MATTHIAS ROICK was awarded his PhD in history in 2009 with a thesis on Giovanni Pontano. Currently, he is Freigeist Fellow for the History of Ethics at the Faculty of Theology in Göttingen and at the Lichtenberg Kolleg, Göttingen’s Institute for Advanced Studies.