



Ethical and Religious Foundations of the Welfare State

Lecture Series



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

On the Topic

What role do philosophical and religious value conceptions play in the state's assumption of social responsibility? The Max Planck Institute for Social Law and Social Policy is exploring this question in a lecture series entitled "Ethical and Religious Foundations of the Welfare State."

Ideas of "good conduct" have been and remain important pillars for establishing social responsibility. They can serve as a basis for creating institutions that are founded on the principle of solidarity and give it concrete form. In the modern welfare state, however, their role is ambivalent. In pluralistic societies, recourse to philosophical or religious ethics to legitimise social protection conflicts with state neutrality. Therefore, the coexistence of state and ethically motivated social responsibility is not without tension, especially when mutual influence can be assumed.

Against this background, the lecture series aims to explore different approaches to a social ethics grounded in religious and philosophical worldviews, to highlight their contribution to the foundation of state social responsibility, and to discuss their interaction with the welfare state. Speakers from all parts of the world are invited to contribute, so that we can include perspectives from the Global South alongside the Western perspectives with which we will begin.

The lectures will take place online and will be conducted in either German or English.

Dates 2025/26

13 October 2025

Prof. Dr. Heinrich de Wall

Hans Liermann Institute for Canon Law
Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen

„Der Sozialstaat, seine religiösen und weltanschaulichen Prägungen und die staatliche Neutralität - ein Spannungsfeld?“

9 December 2025

Prof. Dr. Reiner Anselm

Faculty of Protestant Theology
Ludwig Maximilians University Munich

„Der Sozialstaat und das gute Leben. Über Konflikte zwischen Fürsorge, Freiheit und Weltanschauung“

9 February 2026

Prof. Joseph Balatedi Radinkudikae Gaie

Faculty of Humanities
University of Botswana

„Botho Ethics and Social Responsibility“

21 April 2026

Prof. Helen Alford, PhD

President

The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Rome

„Social Responsibility Between Christian Ethics and the Role of the State “

22 June 2026

Prof. Dr. Markus Vogt

Faculty of Catholic Theology
Ludwig Maximilians University Munich

„Der ökosoziale Staat aus Sicht der christlichen Sozialethik“

Contact

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The lectures will take place online and begin at 5 p.m. We kindly ask you to register in advance at events@mpsoc.mpg.de. The dial-in details will be sent to you after registration.

Please note that the presentations will be recorded for internal documentation purposes. In addition, photos may be taken for use in the Institute's reporting and general public relations work in various media (e.g., website, activity report, newsletter). If you do not agree to the publication of your image, please notify us at presse@mpsoc.mpg.de.

The processing of your personal data is necessary for the purpose of holding the event. By registering, you consent to this. You can revoke your consent at any time by sending an email to roemmelmayer@mpsoc.mpg.de.