

Summary

„Rousseau und die Ambivalenz des politischen Denkens der Moderne“

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Rousseau's "Contrat Social" illustrates the ambivalence of the political thought of modern times. Rousseau criticizes with some justification the inconsistencies of individualistic social contract theories. But his own approach, which is based on the rule of the common will, tends to be collectivistic. Section one of this paper analyzes some contradictions of the individualistic approach as it has been developed by Hobbes and Locke. Most importantly, these theories cannot explain adequately why citizens should care for common goods such as a good legal system. Section two shows how Rousseau tries to solve the conflict between the individual and the common in a way which gives all the weight to the community. The paper explains how the individualistic and the collectivistic approaches are criticizing each other with good arguments, hiding their own weaknesses by emphasizing the logical flaws of the adversary. The dichotomy of individualism and collectivism could be overcome by analyzing the problematic assumptions which underly the arguments of both approaches.

