

Summary

“Funktionen und Funktionalisierungen des Gewissens in politisch-ethischen Kontexten“

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Political ethics of democracy is essentially an ethic of compromise. Conscience is not the executive authority but rather a final, individual and verifiable means of control unrelated to practical decision-making.

Polycontextual descriptions of conscience are embedded in post-humanist theories of society (such as systems theory, theories of postmodernism and post-structuralism).

The central normative self-regulatory body of the individual cannot be adequately described in the traditional sense as an "inner voice" (that is, as an entirely autonomous rating utterance of an individual or as a mere internalisation of social norms) theoretical conception. Such reductionist standard designs miss the peculiar dynamics of norm-making processes in the present, and fall short of the structural richness of the normative constitution of presence.

The outlines of a 'political enlightenment' might serve as new frame in which conscience, morality and ethics can be analysed by the methods of political science. Is it possible to conceptualize ethics that take into account that even private lives are always affected by political conditions and at the same time avoid to postulate substantialist assertions as well as to make contributions to relativist discourses?

As a starting point for such an intellectual transition from ethics policy to political ethics, it is proposed here to take up the figure of conscience. Only that term is capable to capture the explosiveness that is characteristic of many bioethical discourses or debates on "life issues", as they are termed in this paper.