

Summary

„Das gemeinsame Interesse und jedermanns Interesse: der Ort individuellen Glücks in Rousseaus politischem Denken“

by Blaise Bachofen

One current interpretation of Rousseau tends to ascribe to him an apology for the common interest, the price for which must be the sacrifice of the individual to the collective. An adequate comprehension of Rousseau's theory of the common interest requires a distinction between individual interest and private interest. The private interest forms only one part of the individual interest: it is the interest that makes the individual into a particularized and singular being; whereas individual interests taken as a whole allow us to define the common interest, which otherwise would be the interest of nobody at all.

Moreover, if private interests have the effect of acting in the opposite direction to the common interest, and if it is therefore necessary, from a political point of view, to oppose its tyrannical tendencies, we should not conclude that Rousseau does not accord any value to private interests. On the contrary, his moral philosophy and his anthropology witness the detailed attention he gave to what it is in the human condition that corresponds to the private individual. One of the sacred duties of the Republic is to protect the private individuals and their interests.