The Incommensurability of Values: The Limits of Weighing Goods

Original title / Originaltitel
Inkommensurabilität von Werten: Zu den Grenzen der Güterabwägung

Summary / Zusammenfassung
The project turns on two clusters of issues. i) Incommensurability as incomparability takes up the widespread notion that certain things cannot be reasonably compared. There are goods, it is claimed, that cannot be ranked as better or worse or equal. ii) Incommensurability in the narrower sense denies that there is a substantial value in terms of which the relative value of all goods can be determined. It is also the thesis that there are limits to the substitutability of goods. Incommensurability of values is of major significance for practical rationality: If values cannot be compared, it seems that justified choice is excluded. And the reason why such comparison is impossible is often thought to be that there is no common denominator for the goods in question. The three key issues that this research project addresses are the following: 1) Is there a substantial common value by which goods can be compared? 2) Can goods be compared in the absence of a common denominator? 3) What are the practical implications of incommensurability with regard to the possibility of rational decision-making. The project aims to clarify and answer these questions, taking account of contemporary positions and arguments.

Publications / Publikationen

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