



“EARTHLY POWERS: CHERISH TALENTS  
AND PROTECT THOSE WHO NURTURE  
THEM!”

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Working at the Wissenschaftskolleg has been a singular privilege. Never before have so many dedicated and talented people striven so hard to make my intellectual life so easy. Never before have I been challenged to think more widely and more deeply. And – though receiving vital support from Eva von Kügelgen – never before have I subjected myself to such a linguistic challenge! But if to be a Wiko Fellow is to be blessed, then being a member of a focus group is to be twice-blessed: the fellowship offers space and support, but the focus group provides direction.

My own academic project – writing a book on the foundations of public law – is one on which I’ve struggled for some years now. Were it not for the congenial environment created by Wiko, it would probably still be languishing; now it is less than 12 months from completion. It is the culmination of work started in 2000, an intellectual history of public law as *droit politique* from its origins in medieval thought, through its modern formation

and now – if the “posties” (those claiming that we are now living in a post-state, post-sovereign, post-constitutional world) are correct – in the twilight of its existence. Without the guidance and constructive criticism of my fellow members of the focus group convened by Dieter Grimm on *Constitution Beyond the Nation State*, the conclusion that gives any book its sense of purpose would have remained much more blurred.

But the focus group’s support extended beyond this. It also helped to deaden the voices of those awkward interlocutors who must surely have spoken to many who have been transported to our contemporary *Villenkolonie Grunewald*. Rousseau said it first. The voices ask whether, in the process of promoting refined and delicate tastes, the arts and sciences do anything more than spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains that weigh men down. Rousseau’s ironic invocation remains. I have adopted his words as this report’s title; we must each grapple with these questions in our own ways.