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**Walking in bloody sandals and the imagined non-empire.
Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Karl Friedrich Schinkel about the
Roman Empire, Classical Antiquity and the German Future**

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841), and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) pursued different careers but all three are among the most influential German thinkers of around 1800. Humboldt, Herder, and Schinkel share an image of the Roman Empire which is based on common ideas about history, culture, and contemporary political developments.

While Humboldt worked for the Prussian state as a diplomat, reformed the educational system, and spent considerable time as an independent scholar, Herder acted as a church official in Weimar and wrote about theology, aesthetics, and philosophy of history. Schinkel worked as the highest ranking Prussian architect, being responsible for basically all official buildings, but he also wrote extensively about historical and modern architecture as well as about wider questions of cultural criticism, general aesthetics, and the philosophy of history. In their respective fields of work, a similar image of Rome profoundly influenced Humboldt's, Herder's and Schinkel's political manifests, philosophical writings, and architectural designs.

All three spent their life in a Germany, whose major places were the Prussian capital of Berlin, the small towns of Goethe's Weimar and Fichte's Jena, an imagined ancient Athens – and Rome. Humboldt, Herder, and Schinkel had all visited the city or even stayed there for a longer period. The city of Rome with its monuments, artworks, and urban structures substantially defined their impressions of the material dimension of classical antiquity. At the same time, the scholarly tradition of ancient texts as well as contemporary philosophy of history (e.g. Fichte) and aesthetics (e.g. Winckelmann) influenced the image of the Roman Empire as a historical entity.

This paper will explore Humboldt's, Herder's and Schinkel's image of the Roman Empire in the context of their philosophy of history. A particular emphasis is put on the importance of the experience of the actual city of Rome, on the image of the Roman Empire as the "2nd antiquity" after ancient Greece, and especially on the philosophical importance of the Roman Empire for contemporary Germany around 1800. My analysis will also look on some facets of the political, institutional, and artistic realizations of this specific reception of antiquity – besides Herder's writings this paper will therefore analyze some aspects of Humboldt's system of education and of Schinkel's buildings and paintings.

For example, Humboldt, Herder, and Schinkel all drew a sharp distinction between Europe's Greek and Roman pasts. While ancient Greece was perceived mainly as a cultural power, the Roman Empire was seen as a political power which even used brute force to conquer and rule territories – the Roman legionaries marched in "bloody sandals" as Humboldt remarks. The question, if the Roman Empire or Greek culture might be used as a historical point of reference for a modern Germany was therefore for the most part answered in favour of Greece. Nevertheless, the Roman Empire was indispensable as a historical alternative against which a new Germany should be founded.