

**“Scholarship, Morals and Government: Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey’s and Johann
Gottfried Herder’s Responses to Rousseau’s *First Discourse*”**

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Alexander Schmidt (Dr. phil. 2005, Jena) is currently a visiting fellow at CRASSH, and holds the position of Junior Professor for Intellectual History at the Historical Institute and the Research Centre “Laboratory Enlightenment” at Jena University. Professor Schmidt has won scholarships and research fellowships from the German Academic Foundation, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the German Academic Exchange Service. He was a visiting fellow at IASH of the University of Edinburgh in 2009.

His main research relates to early modern German intellectual and political history. He has written on early modern German patriotism, in particular its relation to religious controversies, on the cultural dimension of small-state politics in the Napoleonic Era, and on the relation between beauty, self-cultivation and freedom in late eighteenth-century thought. His current project focuses on Enlightenment debates about the public role of sciences, scholarship and the arts in Prussia from Frederick the Great to the foundation of the university of Berlin, i.e. 1740-1810.

Select Publications

Books

- *Vaterlandsliebe und Religionskonflikt. Politische Diskurse im Alten Reich 1555-1648 (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 126)* (Leiden and Boston: Brill AP, 2007).
- With Joachim Bauer, Andreas Klinger, and Georg Schmidt, eds., *Die Universität Jena in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Heidelberg, 2008).

Articles / Chapters in Books

- ‘Ein französischer Kaiser? Die Diskussion um die Nationalität des Reichsoberhauptes im 17. Jahrhundert’, *Historisches Jahrbuch* 123 (2003), 149-177.
- ‘The Liberty of the Ancients? Friedrich Schiller and Aesthetic Republicanism’, *History of Political Thought* 30 (2009), 286-314.

- ‘Ein Vaterland ohne Patrioten? Die Debatten über deutsche Vaterlandsliebe in der Frühen Neuzeit’, in Georg Schmidt, ed., *Die deutsche Nation im frühneuzeitlichen Europa. Politische Ordnung und kulturelle Identität?* (Munich, 2010), 35-63.
- ‘Irenic Patriotism in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century German Political Discourse’, *The Historical Journal* 53 (2010), 243-269.
- ‘Le pouvoir de muses? Politiques des ‘petits états’, prestige dynastique et culturel sous l’Ère Napoléonienne’, *Revue de Synthèse* (2011).

Introduction to the Paper

The (mutual) relation between the arts and sciences on the one hand, and politics and morality on the other, was a central concern of Enlightenment thought. This paper is part of a larger research project (provisionally entitled *Learning and Monarchy: Enlightenment Debates about the Promotion of Sciences and Letters in Prussia*) which explores this relation by looking both at the intellectual and institutional context of the Berlin Academy from its renewal under King Frederick the Great in 1744/46 to the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810.

Academies provide ideal foci to study the relation between the sciences and letters and society in the eighteenth century. Encompassing French *philosophes*, Huguenot scholars, Swiss and German *Aufklärer*, the Berlin Academy constitutes a unique community within the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters. While there are a number of important studies on the social and intellectual history of academies and scientific societies, such as those by James McClellan, Roger Hahn or Daniel Roche, we still lack a thorough account which relates the self-representation of the academies to a wider debate about the role of the sciences and letters in society and its implications for governments and legislators. This debate lay at the core of Enlightenment notions of progress and of the history of mankind in general. By focusing on this debate Dr Schmidt’s aim is to combine the history of political and moral thought with the history of science, cultural and social history.

Rousseau’s *First Discourse* is an important reference point in this debate. His claim that the progress of the sciences and arts would lead to a decline of morals targeted mainstream Enlightenment assumptions about the interaction between moral refinement and the expansion of the arts and sciences propelling the progress of civilization. It is no surprise that a number of Academy members, including King Frederick II himself, responded to the challenge posed by Rousseau. The contributions by Formey and Herder, relatively little studied in the existing scholarship, mark important stages in a discussion which revolved around the problem addressed by Rousseau. In contrast to many other replies to Rousseau,

however, they not only shared his criticism of the sciences and the arts to a certain extent, but advocated an institutional regulation of knowledge and scholarship which should be read as their attempt to cure the disorders diagnosed by Rousseau. Particularly in Herder's case, the engagement with David Hume was immensely important in shaping his vision of a reconnection of scholarship with the needs of all ranks of society under the constraints of modern commercial monarchies.