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What Is German History? Reflections on the Role of the *Nation* in German History and Historiography*

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> The question of boundaries is the first to be encountered; from it all others flow. To draw a boundary around anything is to define, analyse, and reconstruct it, in this case select, indeed adopt, a philosophy of history. F. BRAUDEL[1]

At the end of the sixteenth century, when the humanist and geographer Matthias Quad tried to find the boundaries for "Germany," he was forced to conclude that "there is no country in all of Christendom which embraces so many lands under one name." Two hundred years later, Goethe and Schiller wrote their famous epigram: "Germany? But where is it? I don't know how to find such a country." In 1832, Leopold von Ranke remained pessimistic that an answer to this question might easily be found:

> Who will be able to grasp in a word or concept what is German? Who will call it by name, the genius of our country, of the past and of the future? It would only be another phantom to lure us on one more false road.[2]

By the time Ranke expressed these doubts, the search for German identity had become a burning political issue, which led many of his contemporaries to try to define their country, linguistically, geographically, or historically. No wonder that from his French exile, Heinrich Heine found the whole question faintly ridiculous:

> Where does the *German* begin? Where does it end? May a German smoke? The majority says no. May a German wear gloves? Yes, but only of buffalo

* John Boyer, Otto Büsch, Gordon Craig, Leonard Hochberg, and James Roberts all made helpful suggestions about how to improve this essay. Of course none of them is responsible for the opinions expressed here or for the errors which remain.

[1] F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York, 1972), vol. 1, p. 18.

[2] Quad is quoted in Gerald Strauss, *Sixteenth-Century Germany, Its Topography and Topographers* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1959), pp. 40–1; Goethe and Schiller's epigram is from *Die Xenien aus Schiller's Musenalmanach für das Jahr 1797* (Danzig, 1833), p. 109; Ranke, "Uber die Trennung und die Einheit von Deutschland," *Sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1887), vol. 49/50, p. 172.

For a concise summary of the changing meanings of the *nation* in German history, see W. Conze, *Die Deutsche Nation* (Göttingen, 1963). I have not seen the revised English version of this book which has been announced by the St. Martins Press.

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hide . . . But a German may drink beer, indeed as a true son of Germanias he should drink beer. . . .[3]

These centuries of uncertainty about national identity provide the backdrop against which the impact of the *Reichsgründung* must be seen and its significance measured. It seemed, to some Germans at least, that in 1871 the question of German identity had finally been settled. When Heinrich von Treitschke published the first volume of his *German History* in 1879, he knew what Germany was. The victorious wars of unification had fixed its boundaries at last, for the future and also for the past. Germany was Bismarck's Reich; and German history was the story of how this Reich came to be, a story to be told over and over again so that Germans might come to feel a "delight in their fatherland" and thereby reaffirm its legitimacy as *the* answer to the German question.[4]

Treitschke's masterpiece helped to consolidate a remarkably powerful and persistent historiographical tradition. To the members of his scholarly generation and of those immediately following, the formation of the Reich was the central historical event. Treitschke and successors told its story very well; they filled it with heroes and villains, determination and distractions, opportunities missed and victories ultimately won. But they never forgot that the main lines of the story were set, first by the existence of the German Volk as a natural, cultural entity and second, by the destiny of the Prussian state to give this Volk its necessary political expression. Over the years, the determinist and Prussocentric emphasis of this historiographical tradition weakened somewhat. Treitschke's strident advocacy of his cause gave way to more subtle and differentiated presentations of the national pageant. Few modern German historians, however, doubted that the problem of nationbuilding was their central theme and even fewer questioned the role of *nation* as the basic conceptual unit within which historical problems were to be defined.[5]

There was, of course, nothing uniquely German about this phenomenon. In every country the dominant historiographical tradition reflects the political forces which define the boundaries of the nation.

[3] Heinrich Heine, "Über Ludwig Börne" (1840), *Werke*, ed. M. Greiner (Berlin and Cologne, 1962), 2: 752–3.

[4] Gordon Craig has edited a convenient selection of Treitschke's work and provided a fine introduction: *History of Germany in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London, 1975). See especially pp. xiii–xiv.

[5] There is, of course, an immense literature on the *kleindeutsch* school. G. P. Gooch's *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston, 1959) remains the best introduction. A sharper and more analytical treatment can be found in Georg Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Middletown, Conn., 1968).

We need only think of how often the history of the United States (and frequently of its northeastern provinces) is presented as "American history" or of how often the history of England becomes "British history" in order to find examples closer to home.[6] Nor is the preeminence of the nation as a historical problem and historiographical category peculiar to Treitschke and his heirs. Everywhere in nineteenth-century Europe, the political triumph of the nation over the life of the present helped to ensure its conceptual triumph over the study of the past. As the readers of this journal well know, most modern history is national history.

What may be somewhat remarkable about the German situation is the way in which the historiographical preeminence of the nation persists even after the historical existence of the nation has been disrupted. In both of the successor states to the Reich, German historians have continued to accept the *kleindeutsch* definition of their nation, even while they were attacking the other ideological and methodological premises of Treitschke and his followers. The major issues in recent German historiography—the economic foundations of the Reich, the nature of German imperialism, the origins of the world wars, the failure of democracy, and the rise of Nazism—have almost all been seen as national problems, best confronted within the boundaries of the Bismarckian state. Although German historians these days seem to disagree about almost everything, the one thing most of them still accept is the historiographical legitimacy of the settlement of 1871. In this sense, the old Kaiserreich lingers on, some three decades after its historical demise, as an afterimage on the national retina.[7]

Now it is not my intention in this essay to deny either the importance of Bismarck's Germany or that of the historical process from which it emerged. I do want to insist, however, that the Kaiserreich is not the only, natural, and inevitable answer to the question, What is

[6] See John Pocock's intelligent treatment of this issue in "British History: A Plea for a New Subject," *Journal of Modern History,* 47 (December, 1975): 601ff, especially 611–14.

[7] Here are three discussions of postwar historiography, each one reflecting a particular phase in the development of the period since 1945: Hans Rothfels, "Zur Krise des Nationalstaats," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte,* 1, no. 2 (1953): 138–52; Ernst Nolte, "Zur Konzeption der Nationalgeschichte heute," *Historische Zeitschrift,* 202, no. 3 (1966): 603–21; and Werner Conze, "Das Kaiserreich von 1871 als gegenwärtige Vergangenheit im Generationswechsel der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung," *Staat und Gesellschaft im politischen Wandel* (Bussmann Festschrift), ed. W. Pöls (Stuttgart, 1979), 383–405.

Hans-Ulrich Wehler's essay, "Geschichtswissenschaft heute," *Stichworte zur geistigen Situation der Zeit.* Vol. 2: *Politik und Kultur* (Stuttgart, 1979), 709–53, provides a survey of postwar German historiography from a rather different perspective.

German history? We have, I think, too often allowed the political sovereignty of the nation state to become the basis for the conceptual sovereignty of the nation as a way of thinking about the past. Political sovereignty enforces clear boundaries, imposes separations, and insists on the primacy of national forms. But human affairs are often not so neat and easy to package. Our histories come in many different shapes. It may be time to give up the idea that all of those living in a nation possess only one past and to accept the fact that nations, like every other sort of complex group, contain many different histories which often converge, overlap, or intersect, but which sometimes move in quite different directions.[8] Surely we must be alert to the connections among these histories, but that does not mean that we must force them into a single mold. If we recognize this multiplicity, we lose what I take to be an often illusory cohesion; we gain a richer view of the past and a much sharper sense of the historical questions which lie ahead of us.

Traditionally, the story of *the* German past has been used as a case study for the process of nationbuilding. Understandably so: the creation of a united Germany dominated European history in the second half of the nineteenth century, just as its destruction dominated European history in the first half of the twentieth. And yet, if we shift the picture of the German past just slightly, its pieces fall together in a different way. The purpose of this essay is to argue that, in addition to being a model for nationbuilding, German history also provides a case study of the nation's limitations, both as a historical force and as a historiographical category. Once we stop assuming that Germany must mean Bismarck's Germany, we can see that German history is made up of a more complex and a much richer set of political, social, economic, and cultural developments, which are sometimes national in scope, but which often exist within, or extend beyond, national boundaries.[9]

[8] For a sophisticated account of how the concept of "history" became associated with a singular process, see R. Koselleck's article on "Geschichte" in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, ed. Otto Brunner et al. (Stuttgart, 1975), 2: 653. The way in which different "histories" can coexist even within a small community is illustrated in B. Cohn's stimulating essay, "The Pasts of an Indian Village," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 3 (1961): 241–9.

[9] Peter Katzenstein's *Disjoined Partners: Austria and Germany since 1815* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976) is a stimulating attempt to view the history of central Europe as an example of failed national cohesion rather than one of triumph. Katzenstein tries to explain why Germany and Austria did not unite, despite the powerful ties of their shared language, etc. Historians may find the book overly schematic, but they will certainly benefit from the originality of the questions and the data Katzenstein assembles to answer them.

I German History Without a Germany: The Eighteenth Century

Let us begin by adopting a resolutely nominalist stance with regard to the question of German identity in the eighteenth century. That means we cannot accept the conventional ways of avoiding the issue. We cannot, for instance, identify Germany with one of its parts, such as Prussia; nor can we impose the *kleindeutsch* Reich anachronistically, pretending that the Germany of 1771 was the Germany of 1871 in utero; nor can we simply assume that there must be something called "Germany," a particular territory, a set of ideas and institutions, or a cluster of traits and customs. It is, of course, this last assumption that we must seek to test. If we look at the history of central Europe in the eighteenth century, can we find German experiences which were both common and distinctive—experiences, in other words, which Germans shared with one another but not with anybody else?

Some answers to this question can be excluded without difficulty. German history in the eighteenth century is definitely not the history of those inhabiting a clearly-defined part of Europe. Even a cursory look at the map reveals the rich variety of landscapes in which Germans lived, the abundance of barriers separating them from one another, and the absence of natural frontiers separating them from their neighbors. Our consideration of the physical map prepares us for what we find when we begin to draw cultural and linguistic boundaries. *Within* the German lands, there was a rich variety of dialects and cultural distinctions. *Between* Germans and other language groups, it is very hard to draw sharp lines. Border regions are often wide belts of mixed settlement; and even when divisions can be established, islands of linguistic minorities exist on either side of them. There was, in short, no terrain, no place, no region which we can call "Germany." This fact distinguished the geographical basis of modern German history from that of countries such as Britain, Spain, or Italy. All of these countries had (and still have) profoundly difficult problems of national cohesion, but all of them, unlike "Germany," have a fairly well-defined area within which these problems can be confronted. Germany, to alter Metternich's famous line about Italy, may have sometimes been more than a "geographical expression," but it was always something less.[10]

[10] Introductions to the problems of German geography can be found in the following general works: R. E. Dickinson, *Germany, A General and Regional Geography* (London and New York, 1961); E. deMartonne, *Europe central,* 2 vols. (Paris, 1930–31); A. Mutton, *Central Europe: A Regional Human Geography,* 2nd ed. (London, 1968).

Eighteenth-century political boundaries are no less elusive than physical and linguistic ones. Central Europe's political fragmentation in the early modern period is well known. Small states, free cities, ecclesiastical territories, and semi-autonomous estates were scattered across the political landscape in bewildering profusion. And even this array of political units is a good deal less cohesive than it might seem if we think of political sovereignty in our own terms. Many of these "states" were themselves cut up by a number of internal civil, judicial, and fiscal boundaries; some were not made up of contiguous pieces, but were joined only by the ruler's personal sovereignty; others had to endure enclaves of independence or conflicting sovereignty within their borders. Looked at from a broad perspective, therefore, "German politics" appears as a hopelessly complicated web of conflicting jurisdictions, uncertain sovereignties, and deep local divisions. Looked at from the perspective of most contemporaries, on the other hand, there was no such thing as a "German politics." Like most other Europeans, an individual's political world was a small and personal one, limited to the village, town, or estate in which he lived.[11]

Hovering over most, but not all, of these political units was the Holy Roman Empire, the entity a majority of contemporaries would have had in mind if they had used the term *Deutschland* in a political sense. Even if we are willing to overlook the fact that the empire included some non-Germans and excluded many Germans, we can accept it as an answer to the question of German identity only with some important reservations. First, by the eighteenth century the empire did not mean much in some areas, especially in the two most important states in central Europe, Prussia and Austria. Second, even where the empire did have a political role to play, this role involved guaranteeing diversity rather than imposing cohesion. The empire worked best where it unified least, which is why it was most popular among those who benefited from political fragmentation and thus sought protection from their larger neighbors. The history of the empire is a kind of German history, therefore, but it is a history which shows us political variety in a new and vivid fashion. As one

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The complexity of central European frontiers is well illustrated in Andrew Burghardt, *Borderland: A Historical and Geographical Study of Burgenland, Austria* (Madison, Wis., 1962). A good summary of the situation in the northeast can be found in C. T. Smith, *A Historical Geography of Western Europe before 1800* (New York and Washington, 1967), pp. 182ff.

[11] On these issues, see D. Gerhard, "Regionalismus und ständisches Wesen als ein Grundtheme europäischer Geschichte," *Historische Zeitschrift,* 174, no. 2 (1952), 307–338.

recent student of the old Reich has put it, "German history [in the early modern period] must be recognized for what it is, a vigorous entanglement of component parts."[12]

Political fragmentation reflected, and was in turn reinforced by, economic conditions in eighteenth-century central Europe. The communications network was poor. Roads were almost always primitive, hard to use at best, impassable when the weather was bad. River traffic was impeded by natural hazards and by a frustrating profusion of tolls and restrictions. Economic activity, therefore, tended to be locked in separate islands, which were then linked by intermediaries to a regional system of markets. Quite distinct from these local economies were the rather small number of enterprises which engaged in commerce across national and linguistic frontiers. These firms, usually to be found only in commercial centers such as Frankfurt and Hamburg, were part of an international system of exchange. For our purposes, it is important to emphasize that there was nothing particularly *German* about either the local or the international economies. Farmers and craftsmen had little contact with their counterparts in other regions, and none of them had much in common with the bankers and merchants who moved upon a European stage. There was no common currency or legislation, no communications network or national market center which joined all of them together. And so, when their various goods moved from place to place, they were taxed like any others. To the tax official or toll collector, there were no "German goods"; everything beyond the boundaries of their own localities was equally foreign.[13]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, central European cultures, like central European economies, were either locally confined or internationally extended.[14] Most Germans lived in a cultural world

[12] G. Benecké, *Society and Politics in Germany, 1500–1750* (London and Toronto, 1974), p. 161. The historiography of the Holy Roman Empire is an interesting example of how the use of national categories can distort our vision. For generations, historians of eighteenth-century Germany emphasized the failures and weaknesses of the Empire. Only recently have we begun to realize that to accuse the Empire of failing as a nationstate is to criticize it for losing a game it never intended to play. Gerald Strauss has given us a useful introduction to the new scholarly view of the Empire in his review essay, "The Holy Roman Empire Revisited," *Central European History,* 11, no. 3 (1978): 290–301.

[13] Jan DeVries has an excellent analysis of the problems of early modern economies in *The Economy of Europe in an Age of Crisis, 1600–1750* (Cambridge, 1976). For the German situation, the best place to begin is Hermann Aubin and Wolfgang Zorn, eds., *Handbuch der deutschen Wirtschafts-und Sozialgeschichte,* vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1971).

[14] I am using *culture* here to mean a set of shared symbols and values. It is important to note that this definition assumes that culture is a process, not just a body of ideas and artifacts; it is *shared* symbols, not just symbols. One must always be aware, therefore, of the institutional network through which the sharing takes place.

which was no larger than their social or economic sphere. These worlds formed islands of local customs and relationships, festivity and folklore, which were set apart from the rest of society by dialect and tradition, as well as by the limitations on scale which oral communication inevitably imposes. A few Germans belonged to cultural systems which stretched across frontiers; like the non-local economies of the eighteenth century, these cultures usually had a European base. Such cultures included the small realms of the aristocracy, the upper ranks of the church, and certain sectors of academic life. Their range was restricted, not by dialect and orality, but by ascriptive status or by the need to acquire unusual skills. Once again it is important to note that there is not much we can call *German* in either the local cultures of the masses or the European cultures of the elites.[15]

The first attempt to create a *German* culture had been part of the Protestant revolt against the corruption of the Roman church. Luther's translation of the Bible, perhaps the most important cultural product of this movement, helped to lay the foundation for a German literary language and public. But the ability of this foundation to expand was limited, first by its links to the powerful religious conflicts which divided Germans, and second, by the narrowness of its intellectual range. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a secular German culture began to build upon, but also to extend these religious foundations. This was essentially a literary culture, composed of readers and writers who were joined through an expanding network of publishers, periodicals, lending libraries, and reading societies. This literary culture seemed open and unrestricted, a fact its participants underscored when they spoke of themselves as a *public* and when they urged that sphere of publicity, the *Öffentlichkeit,* should be free. In fact, eighteenth–century literary culture was able to extend across territorial and social barriers. Threads made up of printed pages and personal connections linked people from Strassburg to Riga, from Hamburg to Vienna. Most of those involved were fairly well–off members of the educated and propertied sectors of society, but some ambitious members of the lower orders also participated, often at great personal cost. To them, literary skills and accomplishments seemed to offer an escape, either vicarious or physical, from the confines of their local worlds. In comparison to the various elite or popular cultures, therefore, the new public had within it the

[15] The condition of the German theater illustrates this point: at the beginning of the eighteenth century, theatrical presentations were either part of local festivities or foreign productions given at courts. See W. A. Bruford, *Theatre, Drama, and Audience in Goethe's Germany* (London, 1950).

potential to engage everyone who knew German. It was, its spokesmen hoped, the basis for a national community, a *Volk*.[16]

Eighteenth-century literary culture was the beginning of what we now usually think of as *German* culture, the culture of Goethe, Schiller, and their great contemporaries. We must bear in mind, however, that this culture only touched a small minority of central Europeans in the eighteenth century. It was a national culture in aspiration, but never, and certainly not before 1800, in actuality. Literature, literacy, even language may make the formation of a national culture easier, but they are not the thing itself. They are the possible causes, and yet not sufficient ones.[17] In cultural life, as in the realm of politics and economics, there is no single connected pattern which we can regard as German. There are instead many patterns, many different sorts of experiences and institutions, symbols and relationships, which sometimes touch or even coincide, but which often remain quite separate.

Edward Fox has suggested a way of making sense out of these patterns. Fox's work is based on his study of France, but it seems no less relevant to German history.[18] There were, Fox argues, essentially two sorts of institutions in traditional French society. The first he calls *areal,* by which he means the relationships among those living within contained territorial units. These units would usually be quite small, limited to the distance someone might walk in a day, within the walls of a city, a primary market region, a handful of villages. As we have seen, for the overwhelming majority of central Europeans in the eighteenth century, political, economic, and cultural activities were areal. Fox calls the second pattern of institutions *linear.* These in-

[16] For a guide to the recent work on the social history of eighteenth-century literature, see Gerhard Sauder, "Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte der Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur,* 4 (1979): 197–241. The older literature is surveyed in Eva Becker and Manfred Dehn, eds., *Literarisches Leben* (Hamburg, 1968).

[17] David Potter has a characteristically acute and insightful comment on the problem of assuming that the existence of common language, literature, and the like *explains* the formation of a nation or nationality. This assumption, he points out, "tends to conceal the fact that the formation of a nation or of a nationality is a process of the creation of conditions of commonality, and that as a process it cannot be explained by taking a fixed set of ingredients and saying that when these ingredients or most of them are put in a one end of the machine, a nation will come out the other." ("Historians and the Problem of Large-Scale Community Formation," in *History and American Society,* ed. David Potter [New York, 1973], pp. 55–6).

[18] Edward Whiting Fox, *History in Geographic Perspective. The Other France* (New York, 1971), especially pp. 37–39 and 56. I am grateful to Len Hochburg for calling Fox's work to my attention and showing me its relevance to the problems addressed in this essay.

stitutions are based upon relationships among people who do not necessarily live near to one another, but who do share some social position, commercial interest, or cultural proclivity which links them across space. The economic ties among merchants and bankers were linear, as were the social bonds connecting the aristocracy and the cultural connections among members of the reading public.

There are, of course, areal and linear institutions in almost all social systems larger than a tribe. The point to be stressed about eighteenth-century central Europe is that these were the only two sorts available. It is also worth emphasizing how our inclination to think in national terms makes it difficult for us to take this point fully into account. National categories tend to make us look for large territorial units and thus to undervalue institutions with smaller scale and local scope. At the same time, national categories encourage us to assume that institutions are integrated and congruent and that they have a clearly-defined territorial location—in other words, to think that institutions are always as they seem to be in a modern nation. But this assumption can lead us to overlook those linear ties which had no territorial base or spatial existence, but which did join people together in practically and symbolically powerful ways.

What then is German history in the eighteenth century? It is the history of these areal and linear institutions which gave shape and meaning to people's lives. It is the history of cultural richness and political diversity, of social fragmentation and economic isolation. It is also the history of the first faint stirrings toward national cohesion, the initial movement toward the creation of a *German* culture and society. But in writing the history of this movement, we must not confuse aspirations with accomplishments by positing the existence of some fictional entity we can call *Germany*. To do so obscures what may be the central fact about the era: German history, as a singular process, had not yet really begun.

II The *Reichsgründung* and the Limits of Unification, 1800–1866

The limitations imposed on our vision by national categories are every bit as troublesome for an understanding of the nineteenth century as they were for our understanding of the eighteenth. In fact, as we watch the historical process of national unification pick up momentum, it becomes harder and harder for us to see those aspects of the German experience which do not fit neatly into the story of the *Reichsgründung*. A glance at any bibliography of nineteenth-century German history will demonstrate the effect this has had on the scholarly literature. The closer ideas, events, or individuals are to the

emergence of the *kleindeutsch* Reich, the more they have been studied. Problems in the history of German economics, culture, and politics which seem to be outside of the nationbuilding process are frequently ignored or pushed to the periphery of the established view. Of course there is a great deal of German local and regional history, most of it to be found in the historical publications of various states and cities. Characteristically, this is history written and read by those in the locality itself; it is of interest only to people who share the experiences of the *Heimat*. It is difficult, therefore, to think of works on regional history which have had a major impact on German national historiography, comparable to Vann Woodward's book on the American south or Georges Lefebvre's on the Nord. Along these lines it is worth noting that Johannes Ziekursch is best known to most students of German history for his workmanlike study of the Kaiserreich; his much more interesting and innovative works on Silesian social history are infrequently cited and difficult to find.[19]

Another illustration of this point is what Frank B. Tipton has called the "national consensus" in the study of German economic history.[20] This consensus is based upon the subordination of economic history to political developments; more specifically, it involves fusing problems of economic growth with problems of national unification. The national consensus has had implications for the way German economic historians define their subject, for the sorts of questions they ask, and for the evidence they use to get their answers. Most often, they have studied economic life in state or national units, have emphasized the importance of political institutions and state policy as a factor in economic development, and have used administrative records as the most important source of their evidence.

Consider, for instance, the conventional view of the *Zollverein*, the Customs Union established by Prussia and a number of other German states in the 1830s. W. O. Henderson, the author of the classic work on this subject, had no doubts about the purpose of his research: "My account . . . endeavored to show that the establishment of the Customs Union—and other economic developments—helped to prepare the way for the subsequent unification of Germany . . . ."[21]

[19] On Ziekursch, see the article by Karl-Georg Faber in Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ed., *Deutsche Historiker*, vol. 3 (Göttingen, 1972), 109–23.

[20] Frank B. Tipton, "The National Consensus in German Economic History," *Central European History*, 7, no. 3 (1974): 195–224. See also the very interesting analysis in Richard Tilly, "Los von England: Probleme des Nationalismus in der deutschen Wirtschaftsgeschichte," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft*, 124, no. 1 (1968): 179–96.

[21] W. O. Henderson, *The Zollverein*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, 1959), pp. v–vi.

Henderson, like the majority of scholars who have worked on the *Zollverein,* simply assumed that it had an important economic impact. His major concern was with the bureaucratic decisions which led to its formation and extension. Furthermore, once the union was in place, it became the basis for talking about a *German economy,* which was historically linked to the national economic system established in 1866–1871. One does not have to question the value of Henderson's work in order to point out that it has some very significant limitations. In the first place, it leaves unanswered, because it leaves unasked, the question of whether the Customs Union did in fact encourage economic growth. According to Tipton, this proposition cannot be demonstrated with the existing data. Second, Henderson's analysis of governmental economic policy does not tell us very much about economic behavior, in large part because data on what administrators think is happening or on what they want to have happen are often not very good indicators of what individual enterprises are in fact doing. Finally, and for our present purposes most importantly, it is misleading to talk about a *German* economy in the 1830s, when local, regional, and transnational economic relationships almost certainly remained of much greater importance for most central Europeans.[22]

Some of the same limitations that exist in the traditional historiography of the *Zollverein* can be found in the historical literature on the economic aspects of the *Reichsgründung.* Even the title of Eugen Franz's pioneering work on this subject, *Der Entscheidungskampf um die wirtschaftspolitische Führung Deutschlands (1856–1867),* suggests his main purpose, which was to show how "farsighted statesmen made the German economy into a foundation for the new Reich."[23] In fact, Franz studied the statesmen, but not the economy. Like Henderson, he assumed that there must be a direct link between state policy and economic behavior and also that developments which encouraged the political integration of Germany must have encour-

[22] Tipton, "National Consensus," p. 202. For other efforts to reassess the meaning of the *Zollverein,* see Tilly's article cited in note 20; Helmut Berding, "Die Entstehung des deutschen Zollverein als Problem historischer Forschung," in *Vom Staat des Ancien Regime zum modernen Parteienstaat. Festschrift für Theodor Schieder,* ed. Helmut Berding (Munich and Vienna, 1978), pp. 225–37; and Rolf Horst Dumke, "Intra-German Trade in 1837 and Regional Economic Development," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial-und Wirtschaftsgeschichte,* 64, no. 4 (1977): 468–96.

Sidney Pollard questions the usefulness of national categories in his important essay on "Industrialization and the European Economy," *Economic History Review,* 2nd Series, 26, no. 4 (1973): 636–48.

[23] Eugen Franz, *Der Kampf um die wirtschaftspolitische Führung Deutschlands (1856–1867)* (Munich, 1933), p. 436.

aged German economic growth. Neither of these assumptions is self-evidently true. When Helmut Boehme studied this same cluster of issues three decades later, he gave his analysis a very different ideological edge, but, like Franz, he concentrated on state policy, political controversies, and the problems of nationbuilding. Boehme's main contributions, therefore, were to the scholarly debate about the political and social origins and implications of the *Reichsgründung*.[24] As Richard Tilly pointed out in his thoughtful assessment of German economic history, "For all its concern with industrialization, [Boehme's book] is basically addressed to conventional historians interested in Bismarckian *Machtpolitik*."[25]

There is no doubt about the fact that Henderson, Franz, and Boehme have helped us to see the economic dimensions of nationbuilding. But they have not told us very much about economic development. Nor have they clarified the role of economic behavior—as opposed to economic policy—in preparing the way for an integrated political system. In order to perform this very important task we must not only use different sorts of evidence, we must also be willing to suspend our belief in the necessary primacy of national units. In other words, to see if markets, institutional relationships, and entrepreneurial decisions actually were moving toward a national system after 1850, it is not enough to show that there was a significant growth in economic relationships within the *Zollverein*. There was, after all, an absolute growth throughout the economy during this period. What must be demonstrated is that "national" economic activity was *relatively* more important than regional and international activity. This can only be done by studying these various levels together. Otherwise one obscures precisely those questions one should be trying to answer.[26]

"German culture," like the "German economy," is an abstraction which encourages us to focus our attention on one sort of historical experience at the expense of others. To most historians, nineteenth-

[24] Helmut Boehme, *Deutschlands Weg zur Grossmacht. Studien zum Verhältnis von Wirtschaft und Staat während der Reichsgründungszeit, 1848–1881* (Cologne and Berlin, 1966).

[25] Richard Tilly, "Soll und Haben: Recent German Economic History and the Problem of Economic Development," *Journal of Economic History*, 29, no. 2 (June, 1969): 310.

[26] This sort of objection can, I think, be raised against Wolfgang Zorn's work on national economic integration, the most recent example of which is his article, "Zwischenstaatliche wirtschaftliche Integration im Deutschen Zollverein, 1867–1870," *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial-und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 65, no. 1 (1978): 38–76. On the growth of economic relationships on every level, but especially internationally, see Sidney Pollard, *European Economic Integration, 1815–1970* (London, 1974).

century German culture is an extension of that literary culture which I mentioned a moment ago, the culture of scholarship and "serious" literature, of the universities and the major national periodicals, of established artists and musicians. Our libraries are filled with the products of this culture and with more than a century of criticism and historical analysis based upon them. But if we look for a moment at the data measuring the distribution of national periodicals or at the number of people who attended universities or at the cost of books, we recognize that this national culture touched no more than a minority. To most craftsmen and farmers, to villagers and the urban poor, to domestic servants and common soldiers—in short, to the overwhelming majority of the population—national literary culture meant very little. These people had no access to the long, tightly-printed columns of the *Nationalzeitung;* they had no interest in the scholarly articles published in the *Staatslexikon;* they could not afford the time or the money to read the latest work by Freytag or Raabe. This culture was not their culture.[27]

But it would be wrong to assume, as did so many of their contemporaries in the literary culture, that because the masses did not belong to this culture, they had no culture of their own. Of course they did; of course they had a set of shared symbols and rituals which ornamented and gave meaning to their lives. In villages and urban neighborhoods, within particular crafts or occupations, there were patterns of festivity, stories told and songs sung, pious habits and traditional beliefs. Our libraries are also filled with information about these things, but it is stored in sections on anthropology or folklore, far away from what we customarily regard as "culture" or "intellectual history." It is in these remote classifications that we must look if we are to find evidence about the cultures of most central Europeans during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century.[28]

[27] Pioneering work on this subject has been done by Rudolf Schenda; see especially his *Volk ohne Buch: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der populären Lesestoffe, 1770–1910* (Frankfurt, 1970). Also of great interest are the essays by Rolf Engelsing, for example, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1973). There are valuable data on this issue in Ilsedore Rarisch, *Industrialisierung und Literatur, Buchproduktion, Verlagswesen, und Buchhandel in Deutschland im 19.Jahrhundert in ihrem statistischen Zusammenhang* (Berlin, 1976).

[28] The best introduction to folklore in Germany is G. Wiegelmann et al., *Volkskunde: Eine Einführung* (Berlin, 1977). Also of value is a special issue on Germany of the *Journal of the Folklore Institute,* 5, no. 2 (1968); and Martin Scharfe, "Towards a Cultural History: Notes on Contemporary Volkskunde (Folklore) in German-Speaking Countries," *Social History,* 4, no. 2 (1979): 333–44. A new concern among literary scholars for popular culture can be seen in the recently-established *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* (1976—). For our purposes, the article by Günther Fetzer and Jörg Schönert on *Trivialliteratur* (2 [1977]:

The study of popular cultures not only rescues an important heritage from condescension and neglect, it also provides a context within which literary culture itself must be understood. Just as our view of economic integration is incomplete until we put national patterns together with regional and international ones, so our picture of literary culture will remain incomplete until we uncover the complex interaction between it and a variety of regional and social cultural systems. Did national culture gradually expand, as educational institutions and increasing literacy penetrated more and more regions and social strata? Perhaps. But isn't it equally possible that as literary culture became more complex and technical, it became less accessible to those with only rudimentary literary skills?[29]

This sort of question obviously has profound implications for the study of nineteenth-century politics. Until quite recently, however, we have been able to ignore these implications by concentrating our attention on political activity of a certain sort. "Politics" in conventional German political history was defined as the ideas and activities of those at the top, e.g., the statesmen, leaders, and ideologues who directed or wrote about state policy. In the past decade or so, historians have studied party organizations, pressure groups, and electoral behavior and we have begun to learn more about a broader range of political experiences. But even this new research on the social basis of political life is usually restricted to the politics of parliaments, parties, and pressure groups. As Mack Walker reminds us in his elegant monograph, *German Home Towns*, there were many Germans in the nineteenth century to whom this sort of politics had very little meaning.[30] In the semi-autonomous towns of the south and west which Walker studied, there was an intense public life, but one that cannot be understood with the concepts and categories designed to analyze national institutions and constitutional issues. Just as it is important not to take the lack of literary culture to mean the lack of culture, so we must not write off as "apolitical" people who were not part of what became the national political culture.[31]

1–39) is of special interest. Of course the whole concept of *Trivialliteratur* is an illustration of the conventional attitudes toward culture which I am trying to question.

[29] For a useful formulation of this question in reference to another period, see Harry Payne, "Elite versus Popular Mentality in the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 8 (1979): 3–32. On the broader issue of elite and popular cultures, some valuable insights can be found in Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978).

[30] Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648–1871* (Ithaca and London, 1971).

[31] Eugen Weber's formulation of this issue is worth quoting: "The question is not whether politics existed in the countryside. Every community was, in some sense, a

In German history, the question of when people became part of a national political culture is particularly important because it bears on the issue of popular involvement in the process of national unification.[32] Historians in the *kleindeutsch* tradition had a good deal of trouble confronting this issue since they sought to maintain two (not necessarily compatible) positions: first, that the formation of the Reich was part of the natural destiny of the German Volk, and second, that it was the great historic achievement of the Prussian state. They usually ended up by suggesting that the state acted as the Volk's agent, without trying to examine too closely the relationship which existed between the two. As one recent representative of this view put it, "Bismarck fulfilled the will of the Volk from above."[33] In response to this extraordinary statement, we can only ask, "What Volk?" Surely not the Reich's Polish, Danish, and French minorities. And what about the supporters of the Guelph monarchy, the Saxon particularists, the south Germans and Austrians? Above all, what about the millions of uninformed and uninvolved Germans who viewed without interest or understanding the news of distant battles and irrelevant debates?[34] These people became part of Germany in 1866–1871, but they were not in any useful sense of the word part of a self-conscious national community. In Robert Berdahl's sharp formulation of this point, "The Bismarckian state was not 'pre-determined';

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polis. The question is whether the local, sui generis interests there thrashed out can be interpreted in the familiar terms of national politics." (*Peasants into Frenchmen* [Stanford, 1976], p. 242).

[32] The most recent discussion of this and related matters is in Otto Dann, ed., *Nationalismus und sozialer Wandel* (Hamburg, 1978). There is also a great deal of useful material in the essays edited by Theodor Schieder and Ernst Deuerlein, *Reichsgründung 1870/71* (Stuttgart, 1970).

[33] Karl Bosl, "Die Verhandlungen über den Eintritt der süddeutschen Staaten in den Norddeutschen Bund und die Entstehung der Reichsverfassung," in *Reichsgründung 1870/71*, p. 151.

Roy Austensen's article, "Austria and the 'Struggle for Supremacy in Germany,' 1848–1864," *Journal of Modern History*, 52, no. 2 (June 1980): 195–225, criticizes the *kleindeutsch* position from a perspective quite similar to mine. Unfortunately I had no opportunity to read Austensen's work before I finished this essay.

[34] Even a superficial look at the electoral data suggests the shallowness of popular support for the Bismarckian *Reichsgründung*. In the elections of 1871, for example, just over half (52%) of the eligible voters turned up at the polls. Among these voters, no more than half can be viewed as firmly committed to the new Reich; at least fifteen percent were clearly opposed, as were a substantial number of those whose allegiance is hard to read (e.g. the Conservatives, Progressives, and Zentrum).

For more on this issue and a guide to the relevant literature, see Otto Büsch, "Der Beitrag der historischen Wahlforschung zur Geschichte der deutschen und europäischen Wählerbewegung," in Büsch, ed., *Wählerbewegung in der europäischen Geschichte* (Berlin, 1980), pp. 16 ff.

it was 'self-determined,' not by popular sovereignty or the Volk, but by its leading statesman."[35]

When we recognize the full force of this fact, we can then see the questions about German nationbuilding which have too often been neglected despite more than a century of intense scholarship on the *Reichsgründung*: To what degree was the German state able to forge a German Volk? How and why did national connections develop in social, economic, and cultural life? What other patterns persisted and why? To address these issues, we need for Germany a book like Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchmen*, a book which would show us how conscription, education, and economic development pulled people from local to national institutions.[36] As things now stand, we know about the army as a political and social institution, but not about how military service affected the way men saw themselves and their society. We know about the lives and thoughts of German academics, but not about the social impact of schools. We know about economic policy and interest groups, but not about how economic growth changed patterns of human interaction. These aspects of nationbuilding began rather than ended with the victories of 1866–1871. Knowing about these matters and others like them will help us to understand "Germany" not simply as a formal political unit, but also as a force in the lives of its inhabitants.

What is German history during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century? It is, among other things, the history of the *Reichsgründung*, of the economic, cultural, and political processes which produced a nationstate in central Europe. It is the history of the *Zollverein* and growth of Prussian economic influence, of national elites and the expansion of a national public opinion, of better communications and rising literacy, of social integration and political mobilization. But German history is also the history of those social groups and regions which opposed these things or were untouched by them. It is the history of regional ties and social separation, of popular cultures and traditional politics. Above all, German history is the history of how these various experiences interacted and coexisted and of how one is inexplicable without the others.

III German History and the History of Germany, 1866–1945

In 1815, on the threshold of the great age of European nationbuilding, Joseph de Maistre wrote that "it is not difficult to unify a nation on the

[35] Robert Berdahl, "New Thoughts on German Nationalism," *American Historical Review*, 77, no. 1 (1972): 70.

[36] See note 31, above.

map, but in reality—that is quite a different thing." More recently, Eric Wolf made the same point when he warned us not to "confuse the theory of state sovereignty with the facts of political life."[37] We should not, in other words, allow the appearance of cartographical cohesion or the pretension of formal sovereignty to conceal the fact that every state is filled with what Wolf calls "interstitial, supplementary, and parallel structures." These are structures which, resisting being drawn into the institutional symmetry which states try to impose, form pockets of internal separation or weave lines which stretch across legal frontiers. In the case of a new nation like the German Reich, these considerations are especially important to keep in mind. Bismarck's Germany had to be built upon, and was necessarily limited by, deeply-rooted patterns of behavior and commitment. Moreover, the new Germany did not include millions of people who had long-standing ties to German cultural, social, economic, and political life, people who did not suddenly stop being part of German history just because the Prussian army won a few battles.[38]

It is perhaps understandable, but certainly unfortunate, that the defeat of Austria in 1866 resulted in her extrusion from German historiography—just as it is regrettable that the political partition of North America resulted in the scholarly separation of Canada from "American history." A good deal might be learned if these various histories were brought together again. We know, for example, that ideas, institutions, and individuals from the Habsburg lands continued to have an impact on the political life of the Kaiserreich. This was most obviously and disastrously true in the case of rightwing political movements, but the same pattern can be found elsewhere as well. Surely historians should make more of the fact that Social Democracy in Germany and Austria seems to be more alike than either is like any other party in Europe. Similarly, a *grossdeutsch* history of liberalism and of political Catholicism, both of which began before the division

[37] DeMaistre is quoted in Lord Acton, *Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History*, ed. William McNeill (Chicago and London, 1967), p. 142, note 2. See also Eric Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies," *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies* (New York, 1966), p. 1.

[38] Gary Cohen's forthcoming monograph on *The Prague Germans, 1861-1914: The Problems of Ethnic Survival* (to be published by Princeton in 1981) shows how German national awareness was in no way limited to the *kleindeutsch* Reich. For another, yet more complicated example of German history outside of Germany, see John Armstrong, "Mobilized Diaspora in Tsarist Russia: The Case of the Baltic Germans," in *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices*, ed. J. Azrael (New York, 1978), pp. 63-104.

of 1866, might display the evolution of these movements in a new light.[39]

The limitation of German history to the history of the Reich is even more difficult to maintain when we turn to the realm of culture. There is a certain irony to be noted here: as we have seen, literary culture was the first truly *German* phenomenon, the first set of values and institutions to move between the localism of the populace and the internationalism of the elites. But the same network of printed communication which enabled this culture to spread across central Europe in the eighteenth century prevented it from being integrated into the state in the nineteenth. The hopes of people like Richard Wagner that the Reich might become a center for German art and literature were not fulfilled—as Wagner himself swiftly realized. German culture, the culture of Nietzsche and Burckhardt, of Freud and Kafka, of Max Frisch and Bert Brecht, was never contained within a single state.[40] Indeed, the more insistently a single state pressed its claims to be *the* Germany, the more fragmented and diffuse German culture became. Never in German history were its cultural resources more scattered and disconnected than they were between 1938 and 1945, the time when more Germans were part of the same political system than ever before. If we wish to put "German culture" into a historical context, therefore, we must not take its national location for granted, but rather try to trace a much wider pattern of connections, made possible by shared language and literature, and sustained by a complex web of educational institutions, scholarly associations, publishing enterprises, and personal connections.

If the nationstate is too narrow to contain certain kinds of relation-

[39] There have been a few efforts to see German political developments in a central European context: Hans Rosenberg's *Grosse Depression und Bismarckzeit* (Berlin, 1967), for instance, includes chapters on Austria. Significantly, this aspect of the book was not picked up by most of the scholars who have been deeply influenced by Rosenberg's work.

John Boyer's forthcoming study of Christian Socialism in Austria points the way towards a reintegration of Austrian and "German" history, since Boyer's work is informed by a sensitivity to the similarities and differences between the two political cultures. Another recent work on Austrian history which emphasizes the broader central European context is Harm Hinrich Brandt's *Der österreichische Neoabsolutismus. Staatsfinanzen und Politik, 1848–1860,* 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1978).

[40] The *locus classicus* for a statement on the incompatibility of the nationstate and culture is of course Jacob Burckhardt's *Force and Freedom: Reflections on History* (New York, 1943), pp. 183ff. For a sensitive historical analysis, see Theodor Schieder's *Das deutsche Kaiserreich von 1871 als Nationalstaat* (Cologne and Opladen, 1961), especially pp. 55 ff.

ships, it is too broad a field to capture others. A good deal of German economic activity, for example, is not easily understood on the national level, despite the obvious importance of the central government as a source of legislation, fiscal policy, and monetary unity. One scholar has even argued that political unification may have increased the importance of regional differences by accentuating the contrast between industrial and agrarian areas within the Reich. A great many contemporaries, among them some of the most outspoken advocates of national sovereignty, were certainly aware that their regions had special interests which were quite different from those of the nation as a whole.[41] In some cases, the centrifugal force of regionalism was increased by linkages between the region and non–German economic systems. And of course there were some German firms with essentially international horizons, firms which operated in world–wide markets for the movement of capital, commodities, and technological innovations.[42] We are not in a position to evaluate the relative strength of national, local, and international economic systems. Only one thing is clear: such an evaluation will involve trying to see all of these levels of economic life together.

National units are also unwieldy for the study of social groups and institutions. Indeed a concentration on national affairs, together with the political orientation such a concentration usually brings with it, has tended to block from our vision large areas of study. This may be one reason why the history of women and family life has not, at least until quite recently, received very much attention from German historians.[43] As we move into those areas of human experience which

[41] Frank B. Tipton, *Regional Variations in the Economic Development of Germany during the Nineteenth Century* (Middletown, Conn., 1976) argues that regional economic differences increased after political unity was achieved. Knut Borchardt has a powerful analysis of one aspect of this issue in his article, "Regionale Wachstumsdifferenzierung in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des West–Ost–Gefälles," in *Wirtschaftliche und soziale Probleme der gewerblichen Entwicklung im 15.–16. und 19. Jahrhundert,* ed. Friedrich Lütge (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 115–30.

[42] See the book by Pollard cited above, note 26.

For some examples of German multinational corporations, see Peter Hertner, "Fallstudien zur deutschen multinationalen Unternehmen vor dem ersten Weltkrieg," in *Recht und Entwicklung der Grossunternehmen im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert,* ed. N. Horn and J. Kocka (Göttingen, 1979), pp. 388–419.

[43] Characteristically, most research on the history of German women has focused on feminist politics, rather than on work or family life. See, for instance, Jean Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885–1917* (Princeton, 1979).

For some samples of newer approaches, see the valuable collection edited by Werner Conze, *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas* (Stuttgart, 1976). An excellent survey of recent work on German social history can be found in P. Steinbach, "Alltagsleben und Landesgeschichte. Zur Kritik an einem neuen Forschungsinteresse," *Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 29 (1979): 225-305.

are clearly not national in their focus—recreational patterns, sexual behavior, demographic trends—we find that national aggregates can conceal as much as they reveal. This is one important lesson to be drawn from E. A. Wrigley's examination of the coal region of northwestern Europe, which demonstrates how easily important demographic patterns can disappear in national averages.[44] As Wrigley shows, the demography of the coal mining areas of France and Prussia tends to be more alike than either region is like its national norm. Once we get away from the presuppositions and limitations built into abstractions like "German society," therefore, a whole range of new problems and possibilities becomes apparent.

As an analytical category, "German politics" certainly has more substance than "German economy," "German society," or "German culture." States are political entities, which have a real locus of power at their center. Here decisions are taken which can determine the fate of the national community. It would be unfortunate, therefore, if our search for new ways to view the past led us to ignore problems of state policy and power. Professor Goubert may well be right that in social life the region is the only reality because, as he puts it, "the *French* peasant is non-existent."[45] There are, however, French statesmen and generals. Their activities should never be dropped from a list of the historian's legitimate concerns.

But even in the political realm, we should be wary of false assumptions about institutional symmetry and cohesion. There almost always is, for instance, a big difference between the order given at the center and the way it is carried out on the periphery, a difference which does not usually become apparent if we confine our attention to the records of the central administration. Recent work on the Nazi period has underscored the value of contrasting the intentions of the policymaker and the performance of his agents.[46] The need to move away from the center is even more pressing in the history of participatory politics. After all, a great deal of the political activity that goes on at the national level is designed to simplify issues, to clarify alignments, to reduce politics to a set of binary choices. Our most readily accessible evidence is about this sort of activity—electoral data, parliamentary

[44] E. A. Wrigley, *Industrial Growth and Population Change* (Cambridge, 1961); see especially pp. 128 and 132–3 for a summary of the argument.

[45] Quoted by Michelle Perrot, "The Strengths and Weaknesses of French Social History," *Journal of Social History*, 10, no. 2 (1976): 167. It is remarkable that France, Europe's most centralized nation, has been dissolved by its historians into regions, while Germany, Europe's most fragmented polity, is treated as if it were a cohesive entity.

[46] Edward Peterson, *The Limits of Hitler's Power* (Princeton, 1969).

debates, official statements, and so on. But this activity at the center obscures as much as it reflects the political life of the nation, as we all know from our everyday experience. In the worlds of local politics, choices are frequently more fluid, alliances more uncertain, combinations more complex. Dick Geary's fine work on the differences between local and national alignments in Social Democracy illustrates just how important it is not to confuse national politics with German politics as a whole.[47] It is not that local affairs are somehow more real or basic than national ones, but rather that they are often different. To recognize this difference is to take the first step toward the essential question of how various levels of political action relate to one another.

What is German history from 1866 to 1945? It is, first of all, the history of the unified nation, of Bismarck's Germany, its origins and evolution, its economic, social, and cultural life, the loyalties it evoked, and the reasons for its destruction. But German history is also the history of experiences which do not fit within the boundaries of the nation, the history of cultural richness and regional diversity, of economic activities and social institutions without national configuration, of relationships which stretch across legally–defined frontiers. Finally and most importantly, German history is the history of how these two sets of forces interacted, the history of a prolonged tension between unity and diversity, between the search for cohesion and the fact of fragmentation. To understand this tension helps us to understand why the promise of national unity had such power for so many Germans and why this promise never was fulfilled.[48]

If we remove the *kleindeutsch* Reich from its unique and privileged position as *the* subject of German history and put in its place the persistent struggle between cohesion and fragmentation, we gain not

[47] Dick Geary, "Radicalism and the Worker: Metalworkers and Revolution, 1914–1923," in *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany*, ed. Richard Evans (New York, 1978).

[48] My point here is obviously related to Theodor Schieder's concept of "incompleteness," which he takes to be an essential feature of German national, constitutional, and cultural development: "Grundfragen der neueren deutschen Geschichte," *Historische Zeitschrift*, 192, no. 1 (1961): 1–16.

One thing about this concept worries me: to talk about "incompleteness" might seem to imply that somewhere, under some circumstances, completion (*Vollendung* is the much richer German word) might have been, or might still be, possible. This, I hope I have made clear, is most certainly not the case.

After I had finished drafting the present essay, I came across Richard Löwenthal's "Geschichtszerissenheit und Geschichtsbewusstsein in Deutschland," *Reden und Ansprachen zur Eröffnung des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte an der Universität Tel Aviv* (Tel Aviv, 1972), pp. 13–29. As his title suggests, Löwenthal's purpose in this essay is similar to mine, although his formulation of the issues is quite different.

only a new view of the German past, but also a different perspective from which to examine the German present. From this perspective, we can see that 1945 did not mark "the end of German history," as some have mournfully proclaimed. Nor is German history after 1945 simply the history of the Federal Republic, the "real" Germany's temporarily truncated extension. These radical expressions of discontinuity and continuity are both misleading, because both define the postwar era in terms of the old Reich.[49] It is time to acknowledge that the present period has a historical legitimacy of its own, a legitimacy which comes not from its relationship to the old Reich, but from its place within a broader and deeper historical tradition. The German present is not a postscript to the imperial past; it is a new chapter in a much older story. This is, as I have tried to show, a story which transcends any single answer to the question of German identity but rather accepts as its subject the peculiar pains and promise of the question itself.

[49] For a striking example of how questionable this *kleindeutsch* residue appears from an Austrian perspective, see the sharp critique of the new edition of Gebhardt's *Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte* by two leading Austrian historians (Fritz Fellner and Georg E. Schmid, "Ende oder Epoche der deutschen Geschichte?", *Zeitgeschichte* [1977–1978], 158–171). I am grateful to Professor Fellner for bringing this article to my attention.