

MODERN NATIONALISM AND THE MAKING OF A PROFESSIONAL
HISTORIAN: THE LIFE AND WORK OF LEOPOLD VON RANKE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
I: The contested relationship between nationalism and historiography	1
II: The origins of German national historiography	7
III: Rethinking the Rankean paradigm of historiography	12
CHAPTER 1 - Memory and Forgetting: A Theoretical Overview	18
I: The construction of modern national identity.....	18
II: The institutional establishment of nationalized history.....	29
III: The problem of modern historiography	38
CHAPTER 2 - The Making of the Historian	45
I: Ranke's career of historian	46
II: The formation of Ranke's identity as a professional historian.....	49
III: Ranke's stabilization of selfhood.....	64
CHAPTER 3 - From <i>Kulturnation</i> to <i>Staatsnation</i>: The Construction of German National Identity as a Prussocentric <i>Kleindeutschland</i>	73
I: An imagined Germany: German identity in transition	75
II: Ranke's concept of national identity.....	84
III: Becoming national: Ranke's identity shift from cultural nation to political nation-state....	91
CHAPTER 4 - From National History to Universal History: Ranke's Nationalist Historiography	105
I: The subjective imagination and objective construction of the German past.....	107
II: The exclusive history of <i>Kleindeutschland</i>	113
III: The inclusion of the German past in European (universal) history	127

IV: Ranke's nationalist historiography of Germany	140
CHAPTER 5 - The Pursuit of Historical Objectivity.....	150
I: Historians' construction of the authentic past	151
II: The historian's unavoidable conditions of subjectivity.....	164
III: The Rankean dualism in historiography: the interrelation between subjectivity and objectivity.....	169
CHAPTER 6 - The Making of the Historical Profession	180
I: The creation of a neutral sphere for the national past.....	181
II: History as a national monument: the construction of a mnemonic nation	191
CONCLUSION	197
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	203

INTRODUCTION

I: The contested relationship between nationalism and historiography

In his unfinished *Weltgeschichte* (World History), Leopold von Ranke, the father of modern historical scholarship, once asserted that in the age of nationalism, although the subject is “universal history” (in this case, the European continent, or the West), the work of history should be to advance national agendas. At least since von Ranke, the concept of the nation has dominated much of our understanding of the modern world. Since the early twentieth century, students of nationalism have adopted a “genealogical” perspective, first proposed by Hans Kohn, which suggests that nationalism is a necessary intellectual response to the sociopolitical problems of modernization in Western Europe.¹ Consequently, they have produced a literature of nationalism and national identity dealing with the historical origins of the nation and its institutional construction as a basic perennial community of the modern nation-state. Bearing the arguable nature of “national characteristics” in mind, scholars of modern historiography such as George Peabody Gooch have divided the study of the development of historical discipline by national borders.² In doing so, they seem to reveal that beneath the pursuit of ultimate historical “objectivity,” a historian’s “subjective” national identification orients his or her historical discourse.

¹ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944).

² G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913); Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), especially chapters 14-18.

Many studies of nationalism and historiography assert that national identity is inherent to the modern self, and becoming national is inevitable in the formation of the modern age.³ With the assumption that everyone has his or her own national identity, an uncomplicated fixed value akin to the biological division of the sexes, students of nineteenth-century historiography have focused primarily on the political engagement of professional historians in the process of nation-building, and less on how historians perceive their own nation-states or how they reproduce their own respective national histories. Yet, two important notes of skepticism have been sounded since the 1960s, challenging the legitimacy of historical objectivity and national identity. First, scholars of the rhetoric school such as Hayden White revitalized historiography by suggesting that historical meanings and authorities are derived from historians' subjective choice of "plots" and "voices" for telling and writing history, rather than objective sociopolitical explanations.⁴ Such scholars, following a "linguistic turn," posited that historians' recollections of the past and interpretations of the historical documents are subjectively narrated by their own rhetorical employment. Although a historical narrative is not a fabricated or completely constructed historical document per se, White and others argued that it is indeed an aesthetic practice, and represents a discursive attempt to interpret the past with the hindsight of presentist prejudice. Second, in the 1980s, members of the

³ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998); Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Lloyd Kramer, "Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997), 525-545; Elías José Palti, "The Nation as a Problem: Historians and the 'National Question'," *History and Theory* 40 (2001), 324-346.

⁴ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner eds., *A New Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

constructivist school of nationalism questioned the inherent notion of national identity. For instance, in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger contend that the nation is a modern construct and is constantly “inventing” traditions in order to create the illusion of a nation’s primordiality and continuity. In his seminal work *Imagined Communities* of the same year, Benedict Anderson defined a nation as “an imagined political community,” whose constructed nature was culturally maintained by the development of print capitalism.⁵ By re-examining Ernest Renan’s 1882 lecture “*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*” (“What Is a Nation?”), they suggested not only that the construction of modern national identity is always in a process of becoming, which demands the continuous reproduction of culturally imagined or invented artifacts to ensure its fixity, but that the implementation of memory and forgetting were also necessary components of this process.⁶ In doing so, they argue that Renan also predicted the incompatibility between the advancement of historical scholarship and the construction of modern nation, and warned: “Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality.”⁷

However, Renan’s warning neither received scholarly attention among the constructive theorists of nationalism, nor has his prediction essentially materialized. As Georg Iggers and his disciples recently observed, not only has the interest in history and

⁵ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁶ For detailed summaries of major theories of nationalism after 1980, see Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), especially the first chapter.

⁷ Ernest Renan, “What is a nation?” trans. and annotated Martin Tom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 11.

in the study of history been associated with the emergence of nationalism in the modern period, but the professionalization and the nationalization of history have also recurrently complemented one another in the global development of modern historiography.⁸ In the face of this, I argue that Renan's definition of a nation deserves further inquiry regarding the relationship between historians' construction of the so-called "objective" discourse of the national past and the institutional formation of a collective national identity. As a genealogical study of the ideology and theories regarding the relationship between the construction of modern nation-state and the science of history, this project attempts to accomplish two tasks: first, to recuperate an essentially constructivist view of traditional, nationalist historiography in the nineteenth century, and second, to document the solution of the founding father of the historical profession, Leopold von Ranke, to the problematic relationship between the emergence of modern nation-states and the professional corps of historians.

Before the increasing professionalization of historical writing in the nineteenth century, the study of history had been considered a supplementary subject to other disciplines and conducted only by amateur historians. The absence of organized sources and archival materials, the lack of critical methods in handling historical documents, and the failure to provide systematic training for future historians, were all responsible for history being regarded as "auxiliary" to the studies of the classics, law, theology and the languages, and for being dominated by dilettantes who attached more importance to literary merits and less to the practice of scientific exercise of an historical work.⁹ Yet,

⁸ Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008).

⁹ Henry Elmer Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1963), 239; Stefan Berger with Mark Donovan and Kevin Passmore, "Apologias for the nation-state in Western Europe

accompanying Wilhelm von Humboldt's reforms of the German university, which were intended to transform the university into a place where teachers and students could "devote themselves to science" (*der Wissenschaft leben*),¹⁰ and the growing intellectual interest in editing and collecting sources of the national past to bolster national consciousness in the wake of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, German administrations and the scholarly community belatedly instituted the German foundation of the historical profession.

Leopold von Ranke was born on December 21, 1795 in Wiehe/Urstrut (of the Electorate of Saxony), and died in Berlin on May 23 in 1886, fifteen years after the formal unification of Germany into a politically integrated nation-state. As a beneficiary of Humboldt's reforms, Ranke became interested in history while studying classical literature in Leipzig and Halle. At the time, the university was immersed in the intellectual atmosphere of German Romanticism. Inspired by Barthold Georg Niebuhr's advocacy of critical methods of institutional sources, Ranke undertook the scholarly task of establishing the foundation of modern historical scholarship through the promotion of methods of source criticism and by teaching history in the format of the seminar workshop.

According to Ranke, historical scholarship should be founded on the idea that historians would not fabricate historical events; rather, they should correct historical errors and prevent human beings from becoming "forgetful." It was this scholarly aspiration of pursuing objectivity in history that called for its professionalization, which,

since 1800," in *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800*, eds. Stefan Berger et al. (London: Routledge, 1999), 4.

¹⁰ Charles E. McClelland, *State, Society and University in Germany, 1700-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 125.

as Peter Novick argues, “provided the underpinning of authority which the norm of objectivity sought,” “offered, in standardized technique, the means of its operationalization,” and “conduced toward an appropriate mode of discourse.”¹¹

Although the establishment of historical study as an academic discipline improved the credibility of historians’ work, they were by no means immune from outside influences.¹² As professional historians were often either affiliated with nation-based organizations or sponsored by state or government agencies, in order to maintain disciplinary autonomy and scholarly neutrality, they had to constantly remind themselves of Ranke’s objective of historiography: “to tell the truth about the past *and* to achieve a *specific* narrative representation of the past.”¹³

Nevertheless, while analyzing his career as the exemplar of professional historian, it was clear that in his formative years Ranke constantly struggled to identify himself with larger communities, such as those of historians and the German nation. His tenure as a history professor and as an advocate of German nationalism ironically demonstrates how valuable a critical distance from certain identities generated by strategically forgetting can be to the professional pursuit of historical objectivity. Using Ranke as a case study of how professional historians can strike a balance in promoting a subjective national identity while narrating an allegedly “value-free” nationalized past, I argue in favor of a new theoretical model while employing the concept of forgetting as an analytic

¹¹ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 53.

¹² Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 207.

¹³ Frank R. Ankersmit, “Representation as the Representation of Experience,” *Metaphilosophy* 31 (2000), 156.

category for dissecting the interrelationships between the development of nationalism, modern historiography and the professionalization of the discipline of history.

II: The origins of German national historiography

Since the eighteenth century, European intellectuals have striven to generate a new mode of “doing history” to replace the unified and systematic Christian view of the past, present and future that has dominated the past three centuries. Historians and philosophers of history have proposed new modes of historiography which focus on comprehending universal historical themes in the context of national states, in order to seek patterns of progress or cycles of life, or new views of historical continuity.

Historical works of this kind, such as Voltaire’s *Essai sur les mœurs et l’esprit des nations* (Essay on the Manners, and the Spirit of Nations, 1756) and David Hume’s *The History of England* (1754-62) challenged not only the erudite or antiquarian technical view of the classical past, but also the instructional function of history in the society of their respective nations.¹⁴

In German lands, in the late eighteenth century, architects of the new historiography responded to the *philosophes* of the French and Scottish Enlightenment, making a scholarly attempt to establish a historical connection between national institutions, such as the judicial system, and the organic life of the nation. Through the conscious employment of original sources and the technique of criticism using auxiliary disciplines, Göttingen legal-historical scholars, such as Karl Friedrich Eichhorn and Friedrich Carl von Savigny, introduced the concept of *Staatengeschichte* (history of

¹⁴ Donald R. Kelley, *Faces of History: Historical Inquiry from Herodotus to Herder* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 233-244; Breisach, *Historiography*, 199-200.

states) that no longer saw states “as *exempla* of timeless categories and definitions,” but rather “as unique and constantly developing conjunctions of forces.”¹⁵ History of this kind, as G. P. Gooch argues, was intended to “construct a sure foundation for existing institutions and ideas by means of a history of the State and of public law” in “the spirit of constructive patriotism.”¹⁶ Although it depicted a picture of the past based upon secure sources and limited interpretations of certain institutions, it undoubtedly fostered nationalist sentiment and stimulated interest in establishing a German national historiography that emphasized the historical development of political institutions.¹⁷ In Justus Möser’s *History of Osnabrück* (1768), a study of the local past of Osnabrück, he expanded the content of *Stattengeschichte* beyond the historical study of German law and suggested that, through a historical understanding of local reason (*Localvernunft*), the uniqueness of each people could be affirmed without losing sight of the general forces of universal humanity.¹⁸ Möser’s work thus symbolized a German scholarly criticism of Enlightenment universalism and the prototype of a German national historiography.¹⁹

Additionally, the effects of Napoleon’s conquest of German lands at the beginning of the nineteenth century forced a shift in focus of these recently minted historical inquiries from the universal attributes to the national characteristics of the German *Volk*. Napoleon’s invasion of the German region and his victory over Prussia at Jena in 1806 stimulated much nationalistic sentiment among Germans. In response, the Protestant Prussian monarchy implemented the so-called “Prussian renaissance of aristocracy,” in

¹⁵ Breisach, *Historiography*, 219-220.

¹⁶ Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, 44.

¹⁷ Breisach, *Historiography*, 223.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Kelly, *Faces of History*, 261.

which the state was deemed to be “a moral institution” and “the guardian and moral education of people.”²⁰ In addition to the call of German nationalists’ to forge a national consciousness for the fatherland, such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s “Addresses to the German Nation” (1807), the retired Minister-in-Chief of the Prussian government, Heinrich Friedrich Karl Freiherr vom Stein, with support of scholars and friends, established the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* in 1819. The objective of this vast collection and colossal compilation of the sources of German history was framed by its motto, *Sanctus amor patriae dat animum*, or “Holy love for the Fatherland inspires.” The purpose, Stein wrote, was to “facilitate its thorough study” and thus to “contribute to the love of common Fatherland and the memory of our great forebears.”²¹

Stein’s collection was important because it laid the groundwork for facilitating the professional development of a German national historiography. Although, in Gooch’s estimation, it was “the chief product of the new spirit of nationalism,” it also provided historians and historians-to-be with convenient access to a collection of critically arranged sources.²² For instance, Ranke relied upon materials from the *Monumenta* in his seminar teaching and honored the *Monumenta* with the remark: “without your great work I could never have attracted a circle of young men to these studies.”²³ The *Monumenta* included documents of German history from the time of the Roman writers on the invasion of Germanic tribes through the Middle Ages, and primarily dealt with “the history of the many German states, the religious history of Germany, German foreign

²⁰ Breisach, *Historiography*, 230.

²¹ Guy Stanton Ford, *Stein and the Era of Reform in Prussia, 1807-1815* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1922), 324.

²² Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, 71.

²³ Quote from Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, 68.

relations, and the deeds of leading rulers.”²⁴ As Henry Barnes notes, the collection made “the productivity and accuracy of succeeding generation of historians” possible, and piqued scholarly interest in collecting all available documents from the national, ecclesiastical and private archives.²⁵ With an explicit national orientation and the critical examination of medieval sources in mind, the editors of the *Monumenta* not only identified the Middle Ages as “a high point of German history in which the pre-eminent role of the Holy Roman Empire in Europe preceded the fragmentation of Germany,” but also helped create a national identity and an image of a unified Germany.²⁶

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, nationally minded intellectuals and statesmen regarded the enterprise of historical inquiry to be the scholarly response to current sociopolitical transformations of the fatherland. They anticipated the fact that through a critical source-based investigation, they could locate the spirit of nascent German nationalism in the medieval past and articulate a collective love of the fatherland. However, the restricted access of documents in archives²⁷ oftentimes made “bribes and political influence” the only means of “gaining copies of documents,” making the scholarly quest for “original” and “authentic” materials “an act of patriotism as much as an act of scholarship.”²⁸

Due to issues with the availability of archival sources, national historians hoping to investigate the earliest glories of the German past had been limited to the medieval

²⁴ Barnes, *A History of Historical Writing*, 209.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 73.

²⁷ For examples of restricted access of documents in archives, see Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, 12.

²⁸ Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 117.

period. Historical works, such as Friedrich Wilken's *History of the Crusades* (*Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 1807-1832) and Heinrich Luden's *History of the German People* [to 1235] (1825-1837) stressed German prowess in the period of the Crusades and sought to engender an admiration for the German Middle Ages in order to reinforce patriotic sentiment among Germans.²⁹ Although the conception of *Staatengeschichte* and the national collection of documents successfully evoked popular interest in the critical study of the national past, the practical objective of historical inquiry that endorsed the national patriotism for the German present and future essentially threatened the disciplinary establishment of German historical science,³⁰ because these *Historiker* primarily wrote history "with a broader public in mind."³¹

The German national historiography did not fully take shape as an academic discipline until Ranke published his candid criticism of contemporary historiographical practice, "A Critique to the Recent History Writer" (*Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber*), in 1824. In this appendix to his first historical work *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nation, from 1494 to 1515* (*Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514*), Ranke exhibited a scholarly ambition to accomplish the goal of historical objectivity, and proposed a more systematic methodology to discretely study the personality of writer and his or her premeditated interpretation of information.³² Although he regularly performed the paradoxical synthesis of an individual political patriotism and the professional duties of historian, he

²⁹ Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, 72-73.

³⁰ Breisach, *Historiography*, 229.

³¹ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 75.

³² Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, 79.

nonetheless advocated for history as a rigorous academic discipline, which was “committed to reconstructing the past free of fictional elements.”³³

III: Rethinking the Rankean paradigm of historiography

The Rankean conception of historical objectivity, or *Objektivität*, systematically accelerated the professionalization of historical scholarship within the territories of the Prussian monarchy, eventually ushering in the formation of the Prussian School of historians. The establishment of the historical profession had essentially advanced the construction of national identity within the framework of nation-states since the nineteenth century. Nation-based institutions, such as the Prussian Academy of Sciences (*Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften*), historical societies, and national archives had not only encouraged historians’ pursuit of historical objectivity in searching for the historical origins of nation, but also supported their efforts to create a historical discipline that was both scientifically and nationally approved. The disciplinary foundation of the historical profession is based on the assumption that there is a normative past, which can only be retrieved and validated from historical documents by professionally trained historians.³⁴ Through collaborating with and receiving sponsorships from regional and national institutions, professional historians strived to transform the discipline into the modes of science inquiry and to claim an exclusive privilege to the pursuit of historical objectivity. A critic of this process, Walter Benjamin, once noted that the professional

³³ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 73.

³⁴ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 100.

historians' preoccupation with objective investigation and historical authenticity was "the strongest narcotic" of the nineteenth century.³⁵

As soon as the awareness of the national establishment of historical scholarship had proliferated beyond the German border, this European trend of historical professionalization swiftly crossed the Atlantic Ocean and reached the northeastern seaboard during the reconstruction era of the United States. When the American past was in great need of a professional renovation, young American students in Germany favorably introduced the German concepts of *wissenschaftlich Objektivität* on the campuses of American colleges. American historians and students primarily esteemed Ranke as the inspirational model for the historical profession. Accordingly, when loyal followers of Ranke established the first professional organization of American historians in 1884, they symbolically appointed Ranke as the first honorary member of the American Historical Association.³⁶

Along with the extension of the imperial powers of western nations, the Rankean paradigm of modern historiography was introduced to the historical communities of non-Western societies by the turn of the century.³⁷ For instance, in the late nineteenth century, in Meiji Japan, Qing China and the subsequent Republic of China, this western paradigm of historical scholarship had immediately become the quintessential model to modernize/westernize the Japanese and Chinese historical profession. It also had been revered and advertised as the only "scientific" way to legitimately document the stories

³⁵ Quote from Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 1996), 78.

³⁶ Novick, *That Noble Dream*; Iggers, "The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought," *History and Theory* 2 (1962), 17-40; Peter Bergmann, "American Exceptionalism and German *Sonderweg* in Tandem," *The International History Review* 23 (2001), 505-534.

³⁷ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 69-156.

of the transformation of the historical nation with dynastic pasts to the making of a modern/westernized nation-state.³⁸ More recently, in the development of a post-1989 historiography of the former Soviet bloc, in nations such as Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Russia, there has been a resurgence of the Rankean paradigm of historiography, or the so-called “Rankean Renaissance,” in order to institutionally advocate the reconstruction of a more empirical and less ideological discourse of their communist pasts based on “factology.”³⁹

All these instances symbolize the abiding significance of the Rankean paradigm to the global development of the modern historical discipline and to the institutional utilization of historiography in facilitating the construction of modern nation-states since the nineteenth century. In the 1990s, three decades after his distinguished study of the ideological applications of modern German historiography, Iggers reminded students of modern historiography to extend their research scopes from simple recapitulations to an examination of how the historian remembers and forgets his national past. As he explains it, “[a] key to an understanding of how a nation conceives itself is contained in the way it remembers aspects of its past or chooses not to remember them.”⁴⁰ In Iggers’ view, the study of national historiography should not be limited to the premise of how the historian narrates his or her subject matter in accordance with deliberate selections of historical documents and rigid disciplinary methodologies. Rather, the historian’s

³⁸ Shih-chieh Su, “The Image of Ranke: A Survey on the Introduction of the Western Historical Thought in Taiwan,” [in Chinese] *Contemporary Magazine* (dang dai yue kan) 163 (2001), 48-77.

³⁹ Norman M. Naimark, “Post-Soviet Russian Historiography on the Emergence of the Soviet Bloc,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5 (2004), 561-562.

⁴⁰ Iggers, “Nationalism and historiography, 1789-1996: the German example in historical perspective,” in *Writing National Histories*, 15; Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, rev. ed. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1983).

emphasis on national difference while forming his or her own national identity also plays an essential, discursive role. It is therefore imperative for students of modern historiography to further investigate not only the dynamics between remembering and forgetting, through which a nation-state exercises power over its citizens, but also the contested relationship between a historian's public and private personae, which fundamentally determine how a historian narrates the historical past and retells the story of his or her ideal national past.

This dissertation examines Ranke's career as the ideal-typical case of the making of a professional historian. It also examines Ranke's utilization of remembering and forgetting in his reconstruction of a national history of Germany, all while propagating a national identity in both private and public domains. This work thus operates on the basis of two key assumptions: that the modern notion of national identity is culturally constructed by creating a temporal void, which is soon filled by the historian's narrative of the forgotten past, and, acting as the "official" conservator of the national memories, the professional historian's narratives become the "official" discourse of the national past. When these two assumptions intersected on the plane of nineteenth-century nationalist historiography, the conflicts between the establishment of an impartial representation of national history and the formation of national identity inevitably occurred. Taking these conflicts as points of departure, this project aims toward a better comprehension of how the historical discipline maintained its status as an objective normal science, while advocating an extremely exclusive cause, and how historians compiled a highly subjective national history while acting in accordance with the

Rankean dictum to tell the past “*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*” (as it essentially happened).

I will analyze Ranke’s conception of history both as a disciplinary paradigm of modern historical practice and in greater depth as a mode of identity formation. In the first chapter, to establish a theoretical framework as an alternative discussion of nationalism, I begin with an analytic reexamination of Renan’s argumentation about the fundamental paradox between the formation of national identity and the advancement of historical scholarship. The relationship between forgetting and historical memory is explicitly defined and used as the analytic category for my examinations of Ranke’s formation of self-identity in both the private and public spheres, and his paradigm of historical writing.

Next, I reconstruct Ranke’s definition of self and document his experiences of crises and conflicts of his formation of selfhood on the personal, the communal/national, and the transcendent universal levels in chapter two. To mitigate the tensions between the private and public personae, Ranke essentially formulated a new conception of history and then deployed his investigation of the past as the solution for stabilizing his self-formation. The third chapter will primarily focus on Ranke’s utilization of historical scholarship as a nonpartisan intervention in addressing the unsettled imagery of a unified Germany envisioned by the advocates of either cultural or political nationalism, and as the “scientific” (*wissenschaftlich*) framework to historically justify his identification of Germany with the Prussian project of building a Prussocentric *Kleindeutschland*.

Nevertheless, Ranke’s construction of national identity and his vision of the German national past challenged the very foundation of historical scholarship because of

the inevitable interplay between ideological and nationalistic preferences. Chapter four examines how Ranke responded to the challenge of disciplinary neutrality. In conjunction with his formation of a tripartite selfhood, Ranke's solution was to imagine a correlation (*Zusammenhang*) between the nationalist historiography of Germany and universal history on a world-historical platform, so that his national preference could be subdued as long as he explained that the formation of the German nation-state historically developed in accordance with the divine plan of the universe. More importantly, the notion of historical correlation will be analyzed through Ranke's historiographical practice of reconstructing an imagined reality of the objective past. Chapter five discusses how the central theme of this fantasized pursuit of historical objectivity fundamentally exposed the problematic dynamics between the historian's search for an authentic past and his unavoidable subjective sociopolitical preference. To better comprehend the theoretical foundation of Ranke's establishment of the historical profession and its contribution to the unprecedented construction of a unified Germany, the sixth chapter further articulates how Ranke disentangled the delicate interaction between the disciplinary perception of historical objectivity and the rational justification of national subjectivity. Last, I reexamine the significant roles the Rankean paradigm of nationalist historiography has played in the recent global development of historical scholarship as the conclusion of this case study of the making of modern nationalism and the professional historian.

CHAPTER 1 - Memory and Forgetting: A Theoretical Overview

I: The construction of modern national identity

What follows is a genealogical study of the constructionist view of nationalism and a theoretical attempt to show how the paradox of professional historians' pursuit of historical objectivity and subjective national identity played out in Ranke's career. As a preliminary analysis, it is imperative to establish the theoretical foundation of this project in Ernest Renan's conception of the nation as a cultural construct. Renan was among the first thinkers to examine the way that nationalism is inherited on a personal level: its novelty and its reliance on the past. Although Renan argued that the nation is a fairly new concept in history,⁴¹ the construction of national identity is based upon the traditional heritage and the past; that is, a presumed common ancestry and shared historical memories.⁴²

The formation of national identity is a long historical process of becoming national. The concept of collectively shared memory provides national identity with a solid and consistent historical foundation, emphasizing a common experience of suffering and the effort to thrive both in the past and the foreseeable future together. The initial intention to construct shared memories of a certain past is not to recollect what really happened, but to envision a collective destiny in the future. As Renan argues, the nation

⁴¹ Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" in *Becoming National*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 43; Tom Nairn, *The Breaking-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1977); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

⁴² Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 46.

“is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion.”⁴³ Hence, a collective sense of belonging requires citizens to “have a common glory in the past and to have a common will in the present,” and further demands that, since we “have performed great deeds together” in the past, we “wish to perform still more.”⁴⁴ The nation and the people are thereby defined by this “will, activity, and *presence* of memory.”⁴⁵ That is, the members of a nation-state share memories of the past and the collective enthusiasm for a successful future together. A shared past with the present in sight unifies fellow citizens and draws a distinction between those who commit themselves to the prosperous future and those who do not. In other words, shared memories are recollections of the past, intentionally shaped by a unified goal of the present, and motivated by a shared vision of future, collective destiny.

Thus, for historians, Renan’s ideas of the attitudes and actions the members of a nation have and take in searching for some form of political sovereignty raised questions about defining nations as primordial and perennial phenomena. Accordingly, when the constructivist school engaged with Renan’s ideas, it not only emphasized the “invented” and “imagined” characteristics in the formation of a national identity, but also suggested the necessity of erasing or re-telling certain parts of the past.⁴⁶ Constructivists argued that, to form a collective sense of belonging, memories of the preceding non-nationalized past have to be deliberately reconstructed or eradicated. This is because the unprecedented concept of the nation-state is one of the ideas that defined the foundation

⁴³ Renan, “What Is a Nation?” 45.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 205-206.

⁴⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

of modern politics. Thus, in the age of nationalism, promoting a new national identity demanded a new discursive construction of the nationalized past to redefine national history in a normative manner.

Creating a novel narrative of how we have arrived at the present requires not only forgetting aspects of the past which are incompatible with the story, but also requires authentication. As Paul de Man argues, this idea of deliberate forgetting consists of a desire to erase whatever came earlier and a hope of reaching a “true” present, which marks a new departure.⁴⁷ Consequently, as institutions introduce and popularize nationalist ideologies, they are also working hard at “wiping out” certain *unusable* parts of the past. On the one hand, as Renan’s famous lecture, “*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*” claims, forgetting plays an important role in forming a new national identity for the modern nation-state. On the other, it challenges the authenticity of the narrated past that historians strive to maintain. Let us examine this latter aspect for a moment.

Memories can be manipulated or deliberately forgotten from time to time. According to the Aristotelian conception of memory, memory is the repeated presence of the past in the present.⁴⁸ Because one’s memory is constantly adjusting one’s present situation in relation to one’s past, memory can be seen as, in fact, “the present past.”⁴⁹ Memory not only contributes to sustaining one’s past, but it also prolongs the present recollection of the past and connects it with a desired future.⁵⁰ Individual memory is likely to be held under suspicion because of its susceptibility to manipulation, and

⁴⁷ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 61.

⁴⁸ Peter Ramadanovic, *Forgetting Futures: On Memory, Trauma, and Identity* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 4.

⁴⁹ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 183.

therefore has been treated as an unreliable source for historical compilation. As scholars have pointed out, memories, upon which identifications heavily rely, “are not fixed things, but representations or constructions of reality, subjective rather than objective phenomena”⁵¹ and are “vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.”⁵² Therefore, in order to steadily lay out the foundations for the nation-building project based upon memories of the past, nationalist intellectuals often call for either a feasible way or a trustworthy alternative to stabilize citizens’ perceptions of the past for the service to develop a collective national identity by providing “reliable” sources of the past.

To legitimize the extensive manipulation of memories in the institutional project of nation building, historians first need to define a new relationship between the past, the present and the future, and to represent the past based upon this new temporal relation. As Matt Matsuda has argued, memory “[is] not recollection of the past, but choices made of the past applied in the present — each choice bearing a logic of obligation to oneself, others and the reasonable truth of the situation.”⁵³ In other words, it is necessary to turn to documentation of the past as a strategic way of “becoming national” in order to *make sense* of how we arrived at the current situation. In doing so, certain non-nationalized aspects of the past are consolidated into a nationalized narrative.

However, cultivating a collective sense of belonging would be impossible if historians’ representations of a commonly shared past could not be concordantly

⁵¹ John R. Gillis, “Introduction: Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John Gillis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

⁵² Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*,” *Representation* 26 (1998), 8.

⁵³ Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern*, 98.

regulated. As John Gillis argues, the problem of memory does not originate from the desire to break with the past; rather it begins with “an intense awareness of the conflicting representations of the past and the effort of each group to make its version the basis of national identity.”⁵⁴ When historians strategically employ forgetting to compile a coherent nationalist historiography, there will always be potential conflicts between the formation of national identity and the development of the historical discipline. If “[the] nation is a soul, [and] a spiritual principle,”⁵⁵ as Renan contends, a normative national history should infuse the souls of the nation-state with patriotic spirit by reconfiguring the past with an exclusive national cause. Because memory cannot be deployed as a reliable source to reconstruct the past as it happened, national institutions require professionally trained historians to provide their scholarly accredited discourses of the authentic past as more dependable alternatives for shaping the nationalized past in the construction of a national identity.⁵⁶

Inevitably, in the age of nationalism, identities eventually have to be subordinated to the *superior* national identity.⁵⁷ Professional historians constantly develop discursive frameworks, based upon historical evidences, to justify the supremacy of national identity. Recent studies on the relation between history and modern identity suggest that the formation of a new identity demands a new temporal relationship to differentiate the new from the old ones. This temporal relationship is rationally established through

⁵⁴ Gillis, “Introduction,” in *Commemorations*, 8.

⁵⁵ Renan, “What Is a Nation?” 52.

⁵⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xi.

⁵⁷ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

various strategies of forgetting. Principally, the act of forgetting facilitates an act by which one's former identity is negated, and a new one constructed.⁵⁸

In *On the Use and Abuse of History* (1874), Friedrich Nietzsche argues that “active forgetting” is the remedy for human being's suffering from the “burden” of the past. In order to establish a comprehensible connection between the past and the present, first we need to utilize forgetting to reduce the amount of what we *have* remembered, and to make rooms for things we *should* remember. Therefore, forgetting enables us to rearrange the contents of memories, and serves as a tool of mnemonic reduction.⁵⁹ Active forgetting also attempts to “rationalize the relation to the past and to render conscious — in order to overcome — all those haunting events that return to disturb the calm of a later moment.”⁶⁰ Forgetting helps us to alleviate the traumatic experience if we actively struggle to forget a burdensome past.

The French novelist Marcel Proust also recognized the therapeutic nature of active forgetting. In his *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927), Proust suggested that because of oblivion, “we can from time to time to rediscover the being that we were, can place ourselves in relation to things as that being was placed, [and] can suffer anew.”⁶¹ In contrast to the accounts mentioned above, for Proust, forgetting does not deliberately wipe out a certain part of the past; rather, it calls for a rediscovery of the past that would enable us to re-associate our past with our current existence. As Iwona Irwin-Zarecka

⁵⁸ Chris Lorenz, “Towards a Theoretical Framework for Comparing Historiographies: Some Preliminary Considerations,” in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, ed. Peter Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 30; Laurence J. Kirmayer, “Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative, and Dissociation,” in *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory*, eds. Paul Antze and Michael Lambek (New York: Routledge, 1996), 191.

⁵⁹ Terdiman, *Present Past*, 22.

⁶⁰ Ramadanovic, *Forgetting Futures*, 50.

⁶¹ Quoted in Terdiman, *Present Past*, 218.

explains, “when we speak of forgetting, we are speaking of displacement (or replacement) of a new version of the past by another.”⁶² By re-connecting the past and the present, forgetting actually makes possible our ability to remember.⁶³ Our memories are always in constant flux, and certain memories must be continuously discarded and conflated. Only through forgetting are we able to “classify and bring chaos into order.”⁶⁴ Therefore, forgetting does not impair our memory; rather, it decides what we remember *now*.

Forgetting also helps the individual to regain his or her own autonomy by manipulating memories of the past. Theoretically, when we attempt to remember the past, we strive to re-imagine the past with detailed photographic images. However, this crisp and vivid recollection eventually deprives us of any effective individual autonomy. In order to maintain such autonomy, we have the tendency to accept the notion that we “regain the past in truth even if [we] cannot regain it in exactitude remembering, much less in totality.”⁶⁵ Because we cannot remember the exact past in its entirety, we are likely to fill the temporal void through “truthful” imagination.⁶⁶ For instance, while compiling his autobiography, *Les Confessions* (1782), the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau admitted that he occasionally used some “harmless ornament” to fill in a blank caused by forgetting. While we recollect the past, we are acting as the “memory-man” and the “forgetful-man” at the same time, in order to make sense of our lives and to

⁶² Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 118.

⁶³ Terdiman, *Present Past*, 250.

⁶⁴ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 205.

⁶⁵ Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 256.

⁶⁶ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 72.

reclaim our autonomy in the present by retelling the story of how the forgotten past *should* be happening.⁶⁷

Although personal recollection of the past (or autobiography) is potentially more distorted and imaginative than historical narratives,⁶⁸ even the most positivist historiography often incorporates prejudiced or ideological elements in an “encrypted” manner.⁶⁹ The narrative reconstruction of the past is determined by the solutions to reduce the conflicts between the authentic past and the deliberately partisan perceptions of the past caused by forgetting. For instance, Paul Ricoeur argues that, according to a hierarchy regarding the practicability of narrating the past in its reality, writing a history should be considered as the most feasible way to tell the story of the past, although it is often crooked.⁷⁰ Forgetting makes it possible for the historian to create an imagined past in his narrative in order to reconfigure a comprehensible correlation with the present. Consequently, identity is meaningfully developed not by its accurate representation, but by its distortion of reality.⁷¹ As Michael Roth suggests, the definition of an individual’s “healthy” or “normal” mnemonic capacity can only be determined by its abnormality, because “amnesia and hypermnesia allow us to fix the normal by illuminating its

⁶⁷ On relationship among forgetting, autobiography, and history, see Jeremy D. Popkin, *History, Historians, & Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and Harald Weinrich, *Lethé: The Art and Critique of Forgetting*, trans. Steven Rendall (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁶⁸ Popkin, *History, Historians & Autobiography*, 17.

⁶⁹ There have been many studies on historical objectivity in the past decades, two distinctive arguments can be found in Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), and Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁷⁰ Paul Ricoeur suggests: “Sous l’histoire, la mémoire et l’oubli. / Sous la mémoire et l’oubli, la vie. / Mais écrire la vie est une autre histoire. / Inachèvement.” in his *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000), 657.

⁷¹ Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 135.

border.”⁷² In this way, the distinction between healthy forgetfulness and remembering, and between hypermnesia and amnesia, greatly depends upon how much human beings commit themselves to the present. In other words, forgetting “defines” what aspects of the historical past are narrated in a normative way.⁷³

Forgetting also plays an important role in stabilizing the transition among identities. For instance, in his description of the French Revolution, Honoré de Balzac contended that the new age would arrive only when its contemporaries forgot their relationship with precedents and ancestry. He argues that, “by cutting off the head of Louis XVI, the Republic cut off the head of all fathers of families.”⁷⁴ This act of beheading symbolized an extreme anxiety to forget the past in a radical way. Conversely, the more we try to discard our connection with the past, the more forgetful we are required to be. As Paul Connerton contends, “the more total the aspiration of the new regime, the more imperiously will it seek to introduce an era of *forced forgetting*” (emphasis added).⁷⁵ Thus, forgetting is a violent act, which enables us to radically disconnect and destroy the existing past, and further to create a new past for the purpose of the present and the future.

In his reiteration of the Nietzschean concept of active forgetting, Frank Ankersmit argues that only through the uncertain process of forgetting ones’ former identities,

⁷² Michael S. Roth, “Remembering Forgetting: Maladies de la Memoire in Nineteenth-century France,” *Representation* 26 (1989), 57.

⁷³ On Nietzsche’s notion of “forgetting”, see Ramadanovic, *Forgetting*, Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, and Frank Ankersmit, “The Sublime Dissociation of the Past: or How to Be(come) What One Is No Longer,” *History and Theory* 40 (2001), 295-323.

⁷⁴ Quote from Gillis, “Introduction,” in *Commemorations*, 9.

⁷⁵ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 12.

however defined, can the creation of a new identity become possible.⁷⁶ Yet, the characteristic of forgetting is generally associated with plasticity and emancipation. This feature allows “otherness” to be emancipated, or intentionally created, and to take over former identities.⁷⁷ Therefore, by forgetting the alleged rigidities of former identities, we are able to see things with “fresh eyes.”⁷⁸ These new selves — whether unaware, undeveloped, or under development — can acquire the breathing room needed to “become who they are.”⁷⁹ Forgetting helps individuals to facilitate personal memories, in order for their personal memories to merge with historical memory. Deliberately utilizing the process of forgetting enables us to produce new recollections of the past for the purpose of filling in the gap between the forgotten and remembered past.⁸⁰

The act of forgetting not only violently destroys existing memories about the past, but also radically creates ruptures among identities. These ruptures provide new identities with the ability to differentiate or disassociate themselves from other identities. In addition, forgetting enables the historian to trespass the normative boundaries of time and space in order to converse with the “great men” of the past, and helps him to sympathetically understand the past by discarding his memories and current identities. Consequently, the ruptures in time and among identities induced by forgetting become indispensable elements for historians’ construction of an objective representation of the forgotten past, with which the new identities intend to associate.

⁷⁶ Ankersmit, “The Sublime Dissociation of the Past.”

⁷⁷ David Gross, *Lost Time: on Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 67.

⁷⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, eds. Garrett Barden and John Cumming, trans. W. Glen-Doepel, 2nd ed. (New York: The Crossroad, 1985), 16.

⁷⁹ Gross, *Lost Time*, 63.

⁸⁰ Susan A. Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-century Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 147.

Nevertheless, forgetting certain parts of the past can become possible only if we acknowledge exactly what was forgotten. Namely, in order to forget a certain part of the past, we paradoxically need to produce a *perfect memory* about the past that we are going to forget, so that the temporal sequence can remain intact without interruption. More importantly, this *perfect memory* dissociates the former identity, and leaves a vacuum in the association of the past from the perspective of the present identity. It is precisely the sphere where professional historians could produce an alternative to replace this temporal void by the *creation of myth*.

However, as the discipline of history sets out to do, only professional historians can reproduce this *myth/history*. Initially, the collective (and rationally remembered/forgotten) past has to be in reference to the scientifically examined historical “facts.” Then, the historian can employ “codes of literary practice” to manufacture a legitimate representation of the past. Finally, the audience substitutes the “authentic” past with a historical understanding derived from the historian’s representation.⁸¹ Accordingly, as Nietzsche concluded, being able to forget the past allows the artist to paint his picture, allows the general to win his victory, and, more importantly, allows a nation to gain its freedom.⁸² As a result, in the age of modernization, the ability to utilize forgetting critically challenges the Rankean paradigm of historiography to represent the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, especially nationalized history.

⁸¹ Ankersmit, “The Sublime Dissociation of the Past”; Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Anthony Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).

⁸² Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 44.

II: The institutional establishment of nationalized history

In order to compile a new national history and promote national identity, institutional endorsement is crucial for historians to be able to rationalize the narrative of the nationalized past. Professional historians are expected to constantly reconstruct and interpret the distant past or the so-called “foreign country” according to current national interests. Notably, the professional development of modern historiography in the nineteenth century had demonstrated that scientific/objective historiography did not impede the institutional construction of national identity. Rather, the historical profession formed a reciprocal relationship with national institutions while manufacturing *unique* national myths to solidify the presumably fixed foundations of the national community.

During this period, the newly established German school of historicism flourished in this effort to stabilize nationalized memories. Historians such as Ranke emphasized that the ultimate objective of historical writing is to tell stories of the past as it happened and to rectify the errors of memories. History should not only provide collective national identity with a coherent and continuous development of national history, but also engender a legitimate perception toward the past, or at least a valid and autonomous knowledge of it, in order to regulate and stabilize the unsettled individual memories with a collectively consistent narrative. As Jacques Le Goff argues, “history must illuminate memory and help it rectify its error.”⁸³ Historians should focus on correcting false perceptions of the past from the unreliable memories. When historians attempt to form a “primordial” collective national identity, or a “new” national identity, which never

⁸³ Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 111.

existed before, they are also expected to reproduce a perfect memory as the replacement of those inconsistent memories of the past.

In the age of nationalism, the institutional promoters of national identity endeavored to search for affinities in secular national settings, rather than in religious faith. By promising a “yet-to-come” communal salvation, the advocate of national identity “seeks to fashion a future in the image of the past.”⁸⁴ National history represents a new form of recollection of the past to construct a national identity. This new version of national history attempts to connect the “useful” past with the present and the future of the nation-state in a comprehensible manner.⁸⁵

In his cynical definition of the nation, Renan defined his subjective notion as a group of people united by sharing common errors about their past and a common present dislike of their neighbors.⁸⁶ Because this view emphasizes that the nation is formed by popular will and political action, citizens’ acceptance of historical errors of their collective past and voluntary subordination to the nation then become the indispensable foundations for cultivating a collective national identity.⁸⁷ In the mean time, Renan’s lecture also voiced a sense of caution that the professional development of modern historiography based upon Rankean paradigm, which had been promoted simultaneously with the German national identity by Ranke’s disciple, Heinrich von Treitschke, might endanger the legitimacy of the ongoing construction of the subjective French identity.

⁸⁴ Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), 110-112.

⁸⁵ Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness*, 155

⁸⁶ Klaus von Beyme, “Shifting National Identities: the Case of German History,” *National Identities* 1 (1999), 39.

⁸⁷ Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 170. For the distinction between subjective and objective perceptions of nation, see Roger Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

However, the formation of an objective perception of the nation, which underlines the role of culture and language, also depends upon a legitimate version of a collective past.⁸⁸ Hence, the ethno-cultural notion of German identity emphasizes that the nation as a historical entity could only be constructed through historians' continuous corrections of accreted "subjective" perceptions of the national past. By doing so, stories of the national past could be re-told in a coherent and rational manner. With a yet-to-be unified German nation-state in mind, the philosophers of the German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) provided the narratives of German history with organic imagery to reconfigure the German nation as an "objective" historical entity. They depicted the organic development of German identity by emphasizing that "nationalism has deep 'roots' in the past, ideas provide the 'seeds' of nationhood, [and] nations 'grow' and 'mature.'"⁸⁹

At the time of the German Enlightenment, nationalists asserted that the formation of their respective national identity was part of a larger civic project. Rather than looking for their common past errors or idiosyncratic distinctions from their neighbors, or even their innate ethno-cultural characters in the nationalized past, nationalists concentrated on "restoring or recapturing a lost identity, as if a definitive collective identity existed in the past and can be recovered through correct historical scholarship and political action."⁹⁰

Once the concept of the nation was molded into a historical entity, historians reproduced

⁸⁸ Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*.

⁸⁹ James J. Sheehan, "State and Nationality in the Napoleonic Period," in *The State of Germany: the National Idea in the Making, Unmaking, and Remaking of a Modern Nation-state*, ed. John Breuilly (London: Longman, 1992), 54.

⁹⁰ Richard Handler, "Is 'Identity' a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?" in *Commemorations*, 30.

the events of the past according to their reconfiguration of the imagined past. The nation, belonging to the present, would eventually meet its historical destiny.⁹¹

By establishing a meaningful correlation between the past and the present, a communal awareness of a promising future can also be projected to unify the citizenry. What happened long before the citizens voluntarily or involuntarily joining the national group becomes an inseparable part of the personal past.⁹² As a result, the national identity “is produced — by historical consciousness — through individual and collective memories and through recalling the past into the present,” and through rationalizing the process in order to “weld experiences of the past and expectations of the future into the comprehensive image of temporary progression.”⁹³ The civic project of becoming national demands a new recognition of temporalities, which can bring the “tradition” of the past, the “reason” of the present, and the “perfectibility” of the future together.⁹⁴

The subjects of memory and history are things that occurred in the past. Just as the function of memory is to validate individual identities, the practice of history attempts to perpetuate a collective self-awareness. In this sense, the restraints to access the authentic past should be, theoretically, the same.⁹⁵ Both memory and history attempt to re-produce a new knowledge of the past by explaining how the past really happened, but only history, as an academic discipline, intentionally and institutionally sets out to do so.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 1996), 78.

⁹² Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3.

⁹³ Jörn Rüsen, “Introduction: Historical Thinking as Intercultural Discourse,” in his ed. *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate* (New York: Berghahn Book, 2002), 1.

⁹⁴ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, 96.

⁹⁵ Terdiman, *Present Past*, 22.

⁹⁶ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 213-214.

However, the content of memory is not the recollection of the past, but rather “choices made of the past applied in the present — each choice bearing a logic of obligation to oneself, others and the reasonable truth of the situation.”⁹⁷ Therefore, the subject of memory and history is the “image of the past constructed by a subjectivity in the past.”⁹⁸

Memory produces an “other” perception of the past, which only makes sense to us. When a collective recollection of the nation’s past, which has existed long before one can physically remember, becomes an integral part of citizens’ personal recollection of the past, the distinction between memory and history needs to be redefined. Because memories are prone to manipulation, “the memory of the past we reconstruct is more coherent than the past was when it happened.”⁹⁹ As Edward Casey argues, what human beings are capable of remembering is not a “truth” about the past with complete accuracy, but “an actively engaged truth” in what we remember, and from which we can generate most meanings for the present.¹⁰⁰ As a result, the truth of the past stored in private and collective memories is in constant flux and needs to be verified and stabilized.

Redefining the relation between “private” and “public” memories of the past is the obligation professional historians take upon themselves. They reproduce history not only to suppress but also to destroy individual memories by systematically claiming the existence of a normative past based upon historical evidences.¹⁰¹ In the name of providing a strong “community of history and destiny,” historians save “people from

⁹⁷ Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern*, 98.

⁹⁸ Allan Megill, “History, Memory, Identity,” *History of the Human Sciences* 11 (1998), 37-62.

⁹⁹ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 233.

¹⁰⁰ Casey, *Remembering*, 283.

¹⁰¹ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 9.

personal oblivion and restore collective faith.”¹⁰² Accordingly, professional historians manufacture “perfect” memories based upon their interpretations of the existing historical evidences to fill the temporal void left by forgetting.

When historians or “memory-men” interpret the historical facts and reproduce narratives for the past, they simultaneously perform violent acts to “authorize” individuals to forget or ease the burden of memories excusably. For instance, in eighteenth century France, Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre once commented: “Whatever I put on paper, I take out of my memory, and, as a result, I forget it.”¹⁰³ Hence, the invention of print capitalism not only facilitates the formation of an “imagined community,” as Benedict Anderson contends, but also has been utilized more to the institutional employment of forgetting than that of remembering. The modern man liberates himself from being an amnesiac by writing down his recollections of the past.

On the one hand, history provides human beings with a retrievable written past, which we no longer remember. Historical narratives, on the other hand, also confirm a rupture or forgetting.¹⁰⁴ Since it is hardly possible for the historian to reconstruct the forgotten past in its entirety from fragmented historical documentation, his or her interpretation of facts essentially determines how the past should be perceived collectively. To communicate in a coherent historical discourse, the historian has to reconfigure the existing recollections of the past, and to create his or her own discursive restoration of a *new* past as well.¹⁰⁵ While exploring and dissecting the non-neutral

¹⁰² Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, 161.

¹⁰³ Quote from Weinrich, *Lethe*, 73.

¹⁰⁴ Terdiman, *Present Past*, 138.

¹⁰⁵ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 209; Casey, *Remembering*, 45.

terrain of the past, the historian's discourse of the nationalized past becomes problematic, because history is always incomplete and is the reconstruction of a past that no longer exists.¹⁰⁶ The community of historians therefore charges itself with the task of searching for a disciplinary solution to neutralize and objectivize historian's aesthetic representations of the past.

In theory, historians rarely fabricate historical evidence out of nothing. Based on the alleged historical facts, they interpret the nationalized past through their selection of evidences and topics, and through the aesthetic practice of interpretation. As Stefan Berger recently argued, historians are "after all, the ones who put the fragments of the past together and imagine the stories that have come to constitute the past."¹⁰⁷ To make stories of the nationalized past available in a continuous and coherent manner, national history serves as the institutionally legitimate depository of national memories, which citizens can access freely in order to substitute for the loss of the past caused by personal oblivion. In other words, history "begins where memory ends."¹⁰⁸

To restore the national identity from the past, or to construct a new sense of belonging, nationalist historians often bear the responsibility for disseminating nationalist ideas to the general public. If the modern nation-state is formed by the past, historians are often the people who re-produce the past through aesthetic representation based on historical evidences. In the simultaneous development of nationalism and the historical profession of the nineteenth century, one of the professional historians' duties was to

¹⁰⁶ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 209; Nora, "Between Memory and History," 8.

¹⁰⁷ Stefan Berger, "A Return to the National Paradigm? National History Writing in Germany, Italy, France, and Britain from 1945 to the Present," *The Journal of Modern History* 77 (2005), 634.

¹⁰⁸ Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), 25.

utilize historical narratives to fill the gap between the “real” past and the “presumptively” nationalized past.

Historian’s reconstruction of the past is essentially a representation of a present image of an absent past. As the French historian Jules Michelet argued, a historian’s task is to “speak for past generation, [and] to bestow on it ... a national history regardless of whether they were aware of themselves as French, German or English at the time they were alive.”¹⁰⁹ While reconstructing the past, professional historians at the same time impose a national identity onto the people of the past. Yet, paradoxically, although the “real past” no longer exists, it can either disappear from or survive in the new reconstruction of the past.¹¹⁰

Historians’ present reenactment of the past guarantees a historical continuity through their retrospective search for the historical “similarities” from the past. When historians successfully create or retrieve the “authentic” past from the absent past, as Casey argues, they confirm “the selfsameness” of the past “in the present by means of a consolidated re-enactment” and assure “a continuation of remembering into the future.”¹¹¹ The emphases upon the existence of the authentic past and historians’ abilities to impartially interpret the historical evidences help citizens not only to memorialize a collective consciousness of history, but also to compensate for the loss of the absent past by filling the voids in time, action and documentation.¹¹² In this way, the historian’s version of the national history regulates the unsettled relationship between the past and

¹⁰⁹ Quote from Gillis, “Introduction,” in *Commemorations*, 7-8.

¹¹⁰ Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli*, 367.

¹¹¹ Casey, *Remembering*, 256.

¹¹² Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness*, 37; Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 55.

the present while providing the nation-state with a relatively stable historical consciousness in the fabrication of a perennial national community.¹¹³ Ultimately, the constructed national history functions as an institutional apparatus for orienting citizens' lives "into time by mobilizing the memory of temporal experience, [and] by developing a concept of continuity and by stabilizing identity."¹¹⁴

A present-oriented past projecting a promising communal future establishes the historical foundation for the national community. This manifold temporal structure of the past, present and future demands that institutions strengthen the popular awareness of national history, which enhances national identity by legitimizing a collective sense of belonging.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, when national historians disseminate the ideology of the nation-state to the general population, two fundamental questions emerge: how historians, or the "elite" narrators, actually remembered the nationalized past, and how they convinced people of the special role of history in configuring events of the past.¹¹⁶

As Ranke pointed out in his preface to *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nation* (1824), "History has had assigned to it the office of judging the past and of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages."¹¹⁷ He suggested that the purpose of writing history was to help his contemporaries to prepare for the coming of a unified German nation-state. To reposition certain non-nationalized aspects of the past in a new historical

¹¹³ Terdiman, *Present Past*, 31; Windschuttle, *The Killing of History*, 78.

¹¹⁴ Rüsen, *Studies in Metahistory*, ed. Pieter Duvenage (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1993), 6.

¹¹⁵ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 44.

¹¹⁶ Janet Hart, "Reading the Radical Subject: Gramsci, Glino, and Paralanguages of the Modern Nation," in *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 174-175.

¹¹⁷ Quote from Leopold von Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, trans. and ed. Roger Wines (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 7.

discourse, the national historian calls for a rational comprehension of the unprecedented national identity, in which a favorable future will be projected in a continuously temporal progression.¹¹⁸ Ranke's career demonstrates that the duties of professional historians are similar to those of the *mnemons* in ancient Greece: to maintain "the memory of the past for the purpose of making juridical decisions," to provide the "memory of the society," and to serve as the conservator of "objective" and/or "ideological" history.¹¹⁹

III: The problem of modern historiography

In conjunction with the development of modern nationalism, the historical profession developed into an institutional instrument of national ideologies, which desired to comprehend how the present evolves from the past. However, while sustaining disciplinary objectivity, historians often failed to candidly relate their narrative of the past to its status in the present.¹²⁰ Namely, the historian operates his understanding retrospectively from memories, while his trajectory of the national past is certainly present and future oriented.¹²¹ Accordingly, the historian inevitably engages in a "dialectic of loss and recovery: the past is irretrievable past, and yet through the substitute object its pastness is somehow disavowed."¹²²

History, as a value-neutral science, substitutes the irretrievable past, and fills in the gap between the forgotten past and the present. In doing so, history enables us to

¹¹⁸ Bernhard Giesen, *Intellectuals and the Nation: Collective Identity in a German Axial Age*, trans. Nicholas Levis and Amos Weisz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 131.

¹¹⁹ Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 56-63.

¹²⁰ Michael P. Steinberg, "Cultural History and Cultural Studies," in *Disciplinary and Dissent in Cultural Studies*, eds. Cary Nelson and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (New York: Routledge, 1996), 104-107.

¹²¹ Terdiman, *Present Past*, 57.

¹²² Bann, *The Clothing of Clio*, 63.

comprehend how we arrive at present situation and where the future will lead us.

Subsequently, writing history becomes “the most productive (and perhaps the only) way” to tell the story of the present with a projected future in sight.¹²³ Hence, to understand the emergence of professional historians and their promotion of national identities through the allegedly objective representation of national history, we need to examine how the historical profession manipulates the collective memory of a certain historical past and bestows a national ideology to the normative past.¹²⁴

The foundation of historical discipline is built on the assumption that history is restored in its proximity to historical authenticity. However, to retell an accurate story of the past depends upon the historian’s utmost effort to objectively retrieve and interpret the existing historical sources according to the rigorous practice of the criticism of document. Certainly, the historical document consists of some power structure, which holds “past society’s power over memory and over the future.”¹²⁵ In order to restore the normative past impartially, the professional historian strives to distance himself from the past by freeing himself from the conventions that have “guided [his] assumptions and behavior” and affect his objective inquiries of the past.¹²⁶ As Ranke once wrote in his *History of England*, “It has been my wish hitherto in my narrative to *suppress myself* as it were, and only to let the events speak and the mighty forces be seen ...” (emphasis added).¹²⁷

¹²³ Ibid., 165.

¹²⁴ Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 97.

¹²⁵ Ibid., xvii.

¹²⁶ Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 16.

¹²⁷ Ranke, *A History of England Principally in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. unknown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), vol. 1, vi.

Historians claim their authority to manipulate time, space, and historical documents by suppressing or detaching themselves from the landscape of the past, and standing above it.¹²⁸ The historians' exclusive ability of disciplinary "acting out" grants them institutional permission to access archival sources, and confers on them the institutional authorization to correlate the absent past with the present. Although the founding methodology of the historical profession enables historians to impartially examine historical documents, they acknowledge that it is hardly possible to restore the absent past in its entirety. To maintain its status as a normal science, historians assume that history should be specifically conceived as an "objective" construction of the specific past, which they believe that they can "get outside of, control, and make coherent sense of."¹²⁹ Therefore, historical objectivity cannot be entirely established by the accuracy of a fixed account, but by a "mutual tuning constituted in well-crafted and elegantly performed symbolic and moral practice."¹³⁰ Ultimately, historical objectivity is not based upon the extent to which a historian could possibly restore the past in its entirety, but upon the "inter-subjectivity" of the scholarly community and society, where "a group of specialists are trained to examine and judge what their colleagues produce."¹³¹

Ranke's career as a history professor and the official historiographer of the Kingdom of Prussia exemplifies that, in the age of nationalism, the historical community established a reciprocal alliance with the nationalist institutions, such as universities and historical societies. Such institutions anticipated that professional historians would serve

¹²⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17; Robert M. Strozier, *Foucault, Subjectivity and Identity: Historical Consciousness of Subject and Self* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 120-121.

¹²⁹ Strozier, *Foucault, Subjectivity and Identity*, 266.

¹³⁰ Michael Lambek, "The Past Imperfect: Remembering As Moral Practice," in *Tense Past*, 246.

¹³¹ Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 112.

as the official *mnemons* and act as the major disseminators of the official version of the national past as a prototype for the practices of nationalist historiography. By emphasizing their efforts to continuously revise the past, their rigorous practices of methodology, and the cross-examinations of their peers, professional historians persuade themselves and their audiences to believe that the *partial* past they reveal is proximately the total past, while part of it historians inevitably manufacture.¹³²

The construction of national and individual identifications is relevant to how the normative past should be reconfigured. In order to attain a present comprehensible representation of the past, the historian's reduction of certain contents of the past implies that certain decisions need to be made about "what can be *understood* and what must be *forgotten*."¹³³ The rationale of historian's selections of documentation is similar to how the individual utilizes forgetting to bestow meanings on the remembered past. It is human nature that we tend to forget things which no longer make sense to us.¹³⁴ Therefore, in the historian's search for the meaningful past, which constitutes the contents of his or her representation of the national past, the historian's self-identification and collective national identity eventually intersect.

To represent the historical past with present national significance, the historian usually establishes "temporal watersheds" to distinguish what to remember afterwards and what to forget beforehand.¹³⁵ When the historian applies *historiographical forgetting* to determine the distinctive milestones of national history, she or he disassociates the

¹³² Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, 327.

¹³³ Windschuttle, *The Killing of History*, 34.

¹³⁴ Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, 119.

¹³⁵ Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, 88.

nationalized past from other perceptions of the past in the public arena. Meanwhile, when personal significances need to be accommodated or subordinated to the collective significances of the nationalized past, *therapeutic forgetting* plays its role in historian's self-formation of national identity. Accordingly, the study of historian's representation of the national past should focus on the problematic issues of forgetting: how the historian strategically constructs his objective grand narrative, principally when forgetting is inevitable, and how forgetting becomes a subjective concept of disassociation which allows historians to freely transgress the boundaries of individual and collective identities in order to actively produce an impartial interlocution in relation to the past, present and future.

To construct new identities, it is necessary to forget those we no longer want to identify with; and, in order to forget, we need to acknowledge what we are about to forget. Thus, amnesia becomes necessary in filling the radical rupture between the past and the present/future with an imagined historical continuity. Ranke's nationalist historiography did not thwart the construction of national identity; rather, it facilitated the institutional projects of nation building in every corner of the nationalized world. The notion of becoming national developed into an "authentic" and transcendental *Weltanschauung* dominating our perception of the modern world. As a result, the popular perception of the national past is institutionalized by an imaginative discursive community of professional historians, whose collective job is one of a custodian of a past which they have a vested interest in nationalizing.

History had been playing a crucial role in the construction of modern nations and national memories. For nations that never existed before or needed to be reorganized,

they primarily “invented themselves through the use of history, often using imaginary, legendary pictures of their past to justify their present.”¹³⁶ In order to reconfigure the national memories, “the nationalist impulse” compelled historians “first to imagine a community of inhabitants in a given land and then to search in its past for useful and inspiring elements to justify its formation, legitimize its existence, and promote and strengthen cohesiveness and affinity among its inhabitants.”¹³⁷ Accordingly, all the aforementioned problems of remembering/forgetting, histories/memories, and subjectivity/objectivity would essentially reemerge in the construction of modern nationalism.

By examining Leopold von Ranke as the critical architect of the historical profession, and as an inspiring advocate of German national identity, I want to return to the importance of remembering/forgetting while identifying the professional historian’s production of national history along with the construction of national identity. In the discussion of memory, forgetting in particular plays a crucial role in the construction of contemporary visions of the present. On the one hand, the therapeutic forgetting provides stabilities in the historian’s formation of personal identities of the modern age. The historiographical forgetting, on the other hand, enables professional historians to coordinate a rational, coherent, comprehensive, and “objective” grand narrative of national history along with particular national agendas. Forgetting thus actively serves as an analytic category for deciphering the discursive complex of the narration of national history, especially when a historian’s national identity inevitably intersects with the

¹³⁶ Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), 4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

collective one in the public sphere. The following chapters will examine in greater detail this constant conflict between Ranke's formation of identities and his production of a national history.

CHAPTER 2 - The Making of the Historian

Throughout his career, Leopold von Ranke's professional establishment of the historical discipline faced several challenges. While examining the personal circumstances of Ranke's own life in greater detail, these challenges seemingly originated from his struggle to attain his personal ambitions while accomplishing his professional goals. The challenges included how to identify himself as a custodian of memory for a Christian German nation,¹³⁸ and how to harmonize the conflict between his private self and professional persona through forgetting and rigorous study of history.

Not until three years after accepting a professorial appointment at the University of Berlin in 1828 had Ranke been aware that some adjustments of his private self had to be made to fulfill the societal expectations of a professional historian. In a letter to his brother Heinrich, he wrote, "[t]he real joy [of historical writing] is to *forget* oneself, to *give* oneself, [and] to become more conscious of oneself in the larger whole" (emphasis added).¹³⁹ Ranke's employment of therapeutic forgetting thereby enabled him to facilitate the process of subordinating himself to a greater cause, upon which the construction of an objective and disengaged self depended. This newly developed selfhood would further assist him in stabilizing the dynamics between his private self and his public persona by conceiving the calling of the professional historian as the need for personal subordination in order to search for the universal truth in God's divine plan.

¹³⁸ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 158.

¹³⁹ Leopold von Ranke, "Letter to Heinrich Ranke in 1828," quote from Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 12.

Ranke claimed that the truth would be ultimately revealed if historians followed rigid scientific methods and learned to study history in an objective manner.

I: Ranke's career of historian

From 1814 to 1818, Ranke was enrolled at the Universities of Leipzig and Halle, where the scholarly practice of philology and ideas of Romanticism had been prevalent. There, he became interested in history through studies in classical literature and Lutheran theology. Although during his university years he showed little enthusiasm for modern history, his passion for finding the hand of God in the workings of history and, correlatively, his desire to participate in the developing field of the historical profession never diminished, even while he worked as a classics teacher in a grammar school in *Frankfurt an der Oder* between 1817 and 1825. During these years of teaching in a gymnasium, Ranke's discovery of conflicting accounts of the events in fifteenth-century Italian history as presented by the leading authorities of that century, such as Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), initiated his professional activity as a modern historian. In an attempt to analyze the sources of historical information and to establish the methods of critical study of the authenticity of the text, Ranke published his first major work, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nation, from 1494 to 1515* (*Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514*). He explicitly criticized the contemporary historical researchers in the appendix titled "A Critique to the Recent History Writer" (*Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber*) in 1824.

The publication vaulted Ranke to fame. He was offered a professorship in history at the University of Berlin in 1825 by the Prussian monarchy, where he remained until his

retirement in 1871. While there, he advocated the exhaustive use and criticism of archival materials as the primary foundation of historical investigation, and strived to establish the seminar system as a curricular model to train professional historians in the future. Yet, the campaign to construct a better understanding of history by claiming a methodological proximity to objectivity encountered challenges from the Hegelian School of philosophy of history led by the legal professor Friedrich Carl von Savigny. Ranke was also involved in a spirited dispute with Heinrich Leo, a young disciple of Hegel in Berlin, regarding their differences on the concepts of historiographical truth and on the interpretations of historical individuality, such as the case of Niccolò Machiavelli. To demonstrate the practicality of his conception of history, Ranke investigated the decline of the Ottoman and Spanish monarchies between 1827 and 1836. Based upon his critical examination of reports of the Venetian ambassadors of the sixteenth century, he published *The Ottomans and the Spanish Monarchy of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Princes and Peoples of Southern Europe (Fürsten und Völker von Süd-Europa im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert)*. After several subsidized trips to archives in Italy between 1827 and 1831, he returned to Berlin and wrote his most famous book, *History of the Popes (Die römischen Päpste in den letzten vier Jahrhunderten)*. The success of *History of the Popes* led to his promotion as professor of history in 1834. Two years later he was offered the Ordinary Professorship, when he began to work on *History of the Reformation in Germany (Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation)* as the ideal-typical study of institutional manuscripts.

In addition to serving as a university professor and the trainer of the professional workshop for future historians, he became a corresponding member of the Prussian

Academy of Sciences in 1835. Because of his leading role in the German academic establishment, the Prussian King Frederick William IV appointed him as the official historiographer of Prussia in 1841. With the privilege of accessing the royal archives, he published *Nine Books of Prussian History (Neun Bücher preussischer Geschichte)* between 1847 and 1848. Notably, when the first generation of Ranke trained historians began to establish their historical career all over the German region, one of his students, King Maximilian II of Bavaria, created a special Historical Commission within the Bavarian Academy of Science and appointed Ranke as chairman of the commission of history in Munich in 1858.

With these official appointments and steady institutional support, Ranke was able to conduct historical research beyond the borders of the Prussian monarchy and German region. He subsequently published *History of France (Französische Geschichte, vornehmlich in sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert)* in 1853 and *A History of England (Englische Geschichte, vornehmlich in sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert)* in 1859. Three years after the unification of Germany, in 1874, Ranke not only published a revised edition of Prussian history, but also worked on his last and ultimate project, *Universal History (Weltgeschichte)*, which was sporadically available to the German readers between 1880 and 1886. The expansion of Ranke's scope of historical research essentially reflected his attempts to reinforce his German identity and Prussian patriotism, and his determination to institutionalize the historical profession for the creation of a nation that was imagined as both Christian and German.

II: The formation of Ranke's identity as a professional historian

Having been influenced by the German romanticist concept of nationalism and the German idealist view of freedom, Ranke believed that the development of self-identification was a process of searching for individual freedom. He wrote, "Standing still is death; imitation is a form of slavery; individual development is life and freedom."¹⁴⁰ Seen in this way, the successful pursuit of individual freedom was contingent on situating oneself in a larger community. Ranke further argued, "Laws and customs, representing the unity of society in each individual member, do not merely exist for the purpose of protecting others against you, or you against others, but also for the purpose of protecting you against yourself."¹⁴¹ Namely, individual freedom is secured only when societal freedom can be maintained by surrendering certain individual rights of liberty.

Although modern selfhood develops over time and is often confined by socio-political and cultural settings, Ranke argues that it should not be formed through a static identification. In the continuous formation of fluid modern selfhood, a strategic employment of forgetting becomes essential to rationalizing and stabilizing potential conflicts. By forming a disengaged self, the act of forgetting could be utilized as a therapeutic process of disassociation to allow a person to objectify his or her identities and then to associate him or herself with a larger group. The construction of self-identity is based on the recognition of the inner self, which then acts to integrate the self into a

¹⁴⁰ Quote from Theodore Laue, *Leopold von Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 74.

¹⁴¹ Ranke, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nation, from 1494 to 1515*, trans. Philips Ashworth (London: Henry G. Dohn, 1853), 166.

larger community or society, where multiple identifications harmoniously exist, and the self can then migrate smoothly from one identity to another without any hesitation.

Accordingly, in a diverse modern society, the self is anchored within a communal life with a future and a past; it is part of “the unity of a series of overlapping projections made from different temporal points of view.”¹⁴² If identity is constructed according to a specific temporal relation which aims to connect a prospective future with a retrospective past, then the constant renewal of self-identification can only be rationalized by establishing a consistent temporal dynamism between the past and the present.¹⁴³ By identifying himself as a professional historian, Ranke could fulfill a historian’s academic duties, and construct a solid foundation for his formation of selfhood.

Two determining factors played critical roles in Ranke’s self-formation: his Protestant faith, which convinced him that it was his calling to be a professional historian, and his unyielding belief in the organicist ideas of the German Enlightenment, by which he could define the relationship between the individual, society, and the universe, and the relationship between the past and the present in an organic manner.¹⁴⁴ As a devoutly religious man, Ranke believed that the purpose of mankind was to comprehend the truth of God in the making of universe. In 1814, he wrote, “Oh, I would like to achieve the high goal, / to be a worthy citizen of [God’s] world! / I would always protect your mercy.

¹⁴² David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 161.

¹⁴³ For instance, in his search for the modern self, the Romantic poet William Wordsworth realized that “recollecting spots of time ‘renovates’ the soul.” See, Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), 58.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

/ I would like to possess your grace with dignity.”¹⁴⁵ Even when Ranke was a classics teacher from 1817 to 1825, his interest in history invigorated his personal search for self-identification. For Ranke, history as a profession was a way to uncover God’s hand in past events. While working on his first major historical work, he concluded that conducting scholarly research was the only feasible way to establish a self-identification within the larger world, in both a political and a religious or cosmic sense. In a letter addressed to his brother, he wrote, “I know that I was born for study and good for nothing else in the world; I do not know whether I was born for the study of history. But it provides my soul with fulfillment and delight, so I will keep doing it.”¹⁴⁶ After a year’s worth of historical research on the medieval German past, Ranke explained to his brother about what he anticipated to accomplish through the study of history:

For sure, I search for truth not for illusion. I search for the truth with all my strength. I am certain [about the existence of] myself and the omnipresent God. One can definitely grab Him with hands. Currently, I have the sensation of swearing to myself a thousand times that I will devote all my life to achieve godliness and history.¹⁴⁷

In addition to sustaining his faith in the omnipresence of God’s truth, Ranke wanted to identify his own existence in history. He conceived a notion of selfhood that one can simultaneously and harmoniously “keep a tripartite (*dreierlei*) perspective in sight: mankind (*das Geschlecht*), the people (*die Völker*), and the individual (*die Einzelnen*).”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, eds. Walther Peter Fuchs and Theodor Schieder (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1964), 44-45.

¹⁴⁶ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walter Peter Fuchs (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 53.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 73-74: “Ich suche gewiß die Wahrheit und nicht den Wahn, ich suche die Wahrheit mit allen Kräften; ich bin der Allgegenwart Gottes gewiß und meine, man könne ihn bestimmt mit Händen greifen. Ich bin gegenwärtig in einer Stimmung, daß ich mir tausendmal schwöre, mein ganzes Leben in Gottesfurcht und Historie zu vollbringen.”

¹⁴⁸ Quote from Wolfgang J. Mommsen, ed., *Leopold von Ranke und die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft*, (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), 63.

In other words, Ranke strived to construct a tripartite selfhood that enabled him to fulfill and identify himself (the individual) within the German nation (the community) and Christian world (the universe).

The success of his *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nation* permitted Ranke to secure a prestigious academic position at the University of Berlin, which additionally granted him with exclusive access to various institutional archives. Ranke learned from his archival research that the multitude of fragmented historical documents comprised the keys to understanding God's working in history, and implied that individual life could also be fulfilled in a fragmented way. He wrote, "I have already found something here [the archive]. The individual naturally does not exclude himself very much. I hope that I could depict it quite well in its entirety. Even though I see myself damned to write only in fragments."¹⁴⁹ Ranke's archival experience made him aware that although based upon fragmented documents, it was virtually impossible to reconstruct history in its entirety, the fragmented remnants essentially constituted the totality of the past. Therefore, a sense of historical "wholeness" could only manifest itself through historian's interpretation of the documentary fragments.

The tension between fragmentariness and wholeness remained a recurrent theme in Ranke's discursive manifestation of himself. On the one hand, he offered a spiritual explanation for history as an intellectual pursuit: "We are all fragments. I believe that I particularly do not want to accomplish something fragmentary in my life."¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, he realized that every fragment in life holds the completeness of his own existence. The fulfillment of one's life is similar to that of historical research, because

¹⁴⁹ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 132.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

historians cannot restore the past in its entirety. Ranke was convinced that fragmented documents contained a broader portion of the past and of one's existence.¹⁵¹ When a historian interpreted sources, he and his construction of the past were actually participating in something larger and greater in which a wholeness of time and selfhood was contained. Taking archival research as the prime example of accomplishing the ultimate goal of one's life, Ranke stated that it started "from a smaller interest," and "will be automatically led to a greater one."¹⁵² As Ranke concluded his first archival research, he wrote,

... I was guided here [to the archive]. I am here and was born to be here. My happiness and my pleasure are here; my life and my destiny are to be understood here.¹⁵³

In the process of becoming a professional historian, Ranke anticipated a life-long project with a dual mission: to discover the totality of his life, and to restore the past in its entirety. During his formative years, Ranke's search for the historical truth from the past and the search for the tripartite selfhood finally intersected.

Nevertheless, the fragmented and lifeless archival document held a force of regeneration that propelled the development of human history as well as the meaning of individual life. In his *History of the Popes* (1834-1836), Ranke wrote, "How often should we not be comforted by perceiving in the first as in the last, that the fresh germ is hidden beneath the decay we deplore, and that new life is proceeding from death!"¹⁵⁴ He

¹⁵¹ During Ranke's archival research in Venice, in a letter to his friend Heinrich Ritter, he wrote: "These writings tie a great part of my experience." Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Alfred Dove (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890), 243.

¹⁵² Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 203.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 203: "... hierzu war ich berufen; hierzu bin ich da und geboren, hierin sind mein Leiden und Freuden, mein Leben und meine Bestimmung ist hierin begriffen."

¹⁵⁴ Ranke, *History of the Popes: Their Church and State*, trans. E. Fowler (1901; repr., New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), vol. 1, 44-45.

argued that new life always regenerates its force from the hidden elements contained in the things that are no longer present. Influenced by the philosophers of the German Enlightenment, the organicist notion of historical development could also be noticed in Ranke's conception of history. This notion emphasized the importance of temporal continuity in human history and was designed to establish a harmonious correlation not only among the past, the present and the future, but also among the individual, the community and the universe.

Ranke strived to bridge his formation of tripartite selfhood with his establishment of his life-long career as a historian. He applied the analogy of organicism to his professional efforts of unlocking the secret of universal history, concluding that,

Not a people in the world has remained out of contact with others. This relationship, inherent in a people's own nature, is the one by which it enters into universal history, and must be emphasized in the universal history.¹⁵⁵

Ranke argued that every individual could attain his or her own identity in the context of universal history. He conceived history as the aggregate of the perpetual interaction between individuals, communities, and peoples in the past. To study it, historians needed to focus on particular individual figures and specific national communities or states. If historians adopted a "scientific" (*wissenschaftlich*) approach, they could restore the transcendent universal significance from the historical narratives of the fragmented past. Ranke contended that the desire to acquire a system of knowledge was man's unique virtue, with which one would be able to identify himself and to distinguish himself from other creatures.¹⁵⁶ He thereby integrated the organicist analogy of historical development

¹⁵⁵ Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, trans. and ed. Roger Wines (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 103.

¹⁵⁶ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 124.

and the formation of communities with his calling to “uncover” God’s working of the universe through the study of history. This effort in synthesis enabled him to recognize the twofold obligation of the professional historian, in which the historian “is only an organ of the universal spirit (*allgemeinen Geist*), [and] the spirit speaks through him and envisions itself.”¹⁵⁷

When Ranke chose historical scholarship as his calling and career, he cautiously devoted extra attention to the expectations he received from people around him. He recognized that the study of history would allow him to “unlock a new world,”¹⁵⁸ which would be as significant as Christopher Columbus’ “discovery” of the New World in 1492. For Ranke, the historian’s discovery of historical truth from voluminous fragmented documents in the archives demanded the same expertise and determination that Columbus carried with him in his adventure. In a letter to his wife, during his archival trip in France in 1850, he was surprised that the French authority granted him so much freedom to “discover” (*entdecken*) certain parts of the French past.¹⁵⁹ Ranke’s deliberate choice of *entdecken* to describe his archival research arguably implied that he consciously anticipated discovering an “uncharted” past, which had either been forgotten or remained to be found in the scholarly practices of modern historiography.

Ranke additionally acknowledged that institutional support for his access to archives was as important as the Spanish Castilian support was to Columbus’ adventure. In a letter to his friend, Heinrich Ritter, he wrote: “with the opening of the archive ... I

¹⁵⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, eds. Volker Dotterweich and Walther Peter Fuchs (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1975), 134.

¹⁵⁸ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 297.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 339.

suppose that I would become a Columbus in the Venetian history.”¹⁶⁰ The ambition to equate his project of historical discovery with Columbus’ geographical discovery coincided with the transformation of the German intellectuals’ perception of Columbus in the nineteenth century. This perception evolved from “the romantic visionary to scientist in the service of state; and from misunderstood genius to guilt-laden foreigner to [a persona] vindicated by history.”¹⁶¹ Ultimately, the image of Columbus could be utilized as “the vehicle for the creation of a new ‘German’ identity and mission.”¹⁶² Ranke contended that Columbus’ geographic discovery helped the Spanish monarchy to distinguish its identity from that of Portuguese by expanding Castilian *Weltanschauung*. He wrote, “God’s gift and the discovery this excellent man [Columbus] had made primarily led to the continuation of the Castilian-Portuguese difference.”¹⁶³ Identifying himself as the Columbus of Venetian history, Ranke expected that he could help his contemporary Germans to acquire a better comprehension of the *neuere Geschichte* that would separate “us, the Germans” in the present from “others” in the past.

As this idea evolved, Ranke initially believed that historian’s research should also come with great freedom. With unrestricted access to different periods of time, the historian could act like an “independent” explorer without subordinating his perspectives of inquiry to a “foreigner’s hand.” In his *Study of History (Studium der Geschichte)*,

¹⁶⁰ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 123.

¹⁶¹ In the first half of the nineteenth century, the story about the adventure of Columbus, introduced by the Prussian naturalist and explorer, Alexander von Humboldt, had been told and interpreted as an inspiring example of conducting scientific exploration in the service of state. Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 174.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Ranke, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations, from 1494 to 1514*, trans. Philip A. Ashworth (London: George Bell and Sons, 1887), 68.

written between 1818 and 1824, Ranke argued that because the world developed in a forward-looking course which connected “the infantile world” with “the gateway to the future,” historian needed to be able to “step in and out” of history freely in order to experience “the depth” and “the bosom” of historical actions.¹⁶⁴ Namely, if history could function as an academic discipline that dealt with the forward movement of time and aim directly at the future and not at the past, historians merely needed to show God’s omnipotence, “from which the noble and great men originated,” by “discovery of an unknown world history.”¹⁶⁵ To accomplish this goal, Ranke proposed an interchangeable recognition of temporalities and spatialities. If the past could be regarded as a foreign country, it would validate historians’ ability to enter into and withdraw from the historical past. Ranke principally drew a comparable significance between the historian’s discovery of the unknown past and Columbus’s discovery of uncharted territories. The exploration of history and the construction of selfhood could thereby be regarded not only as a spiritual and rational pursuit of a temporal “discovery,” but also as a “nationalist” or “colonialist” project of a historical “conquest.”

From 1831 to 1836, Ranke undertook to edit a conservative political periodical, *Historische Politische Zeitschrift*. Coincidentally, it was the same period when Prussian politics was in transition from *Weltbürgertum* to the *Nationalstaat*, where the concept of nation-statehood dominated mainstream political discourse among conservative intellectuals during the post-revolutionary era of 1789 and 1830.¹⁶⁶ As a political journalist, Ranke devoted his time to the promotion of national identity in the world of

¹⁶⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol 1: *Tagebücher*, 62.

¹⁶⁵ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 155.

¹⁶⁶ Laue, *Leopold von Ranke*, 5.

secular politics, which would later contribute to the religious requirement of being a world citizen in God's world. He argued that the main duty for the editor of this conservative periodical was to "initiate a local/native development to resist against the excessive foreign demands ... and [to] contribute himself to the Fatherland for a good cause."¹⁶⁷

Ranke was convinced that studying the German past would help Germans institute a unique political agenda that was different from those of other Europeans. Ranke's anti-revolutionary rhetoric could also be found in his argument that the French Revolution should be considered a "local" incident that could only happen in the particular French sociopolitical settings. He wrote:

It seems to me that the [French] Revolution could be well avoided, if people do not provoke it.

First of all, one must be considerate of its development in France: it has [its] root and base. It is a local [incident].¹⁶⁸

As an outsider to the French nation, Ranke respected the idiosyncratic French characteristics of the Revolution. Nevertheless, he was reluctant to recognize the compatibility between the universal significance of the Revolution and the distinctive development of German politics. This conservative project of nationalism, as Karl Mannheim once pointed out, was not to "restore old ways of life as creating convincing *memory* of tradition," but "to retrieve the irretrievable, to construct the illusion that the present was seamlessly bound to an organic past."¹⁶⁹ Ranke's objective was to facilitate

¹⁶⁷ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 243.

¹⁶⁸ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 47: "Mich dünkt, diese Revolution konnte sehr gut vermieden werden, wofern man sie nicht selbst veranlaßte. Man muß also auf ihre Entwicklung in Frankreich zunächst Rücksicht nehmen. — Hier hat sie Grund und Boden: hier ist sie heimisch."

¹⁶⁹ Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 166.

a smooth transition from being enlightened world-citizens to becoming civilized citizens of the German nation. In this way, the social identities of being a historian and a political journalist were bolstered by his sacred mission to assist Germans.

Ranke firmly believed that historical studies should serve a greater good, and not just be doing history for the sake of history. This belief gradually gained in intensity over the course of his career. Initially, Ranke identified his historical career as a scientific exploration akin to the project of Columbus. Once he intended to compile a history for the interest of the Germans and the German scholars, Ranke turned his vocational aspirations to the conqueror of colonies, Captain Cook. He noted that if his career could not be as successful as Columbus', he could at least achieve something similar to what Captain Cook had done; that is, to find and to conquer "a beautiful and unknown island of world history."¹⁷⁰ This shift of the identity of the professional historian implied that in addition to conducting his research based upon the rigorous scientific methodology, Ranke, the explorer of the German past, could apply his findings to help Germans to cultivate a distinctive German identity.

Moreover, the success of Ranke's formation of tripartite selfhood depended upon his ability to synthesize these two coexisting social identities. In the age of nationalism, both historian and political journalist presented an identical public persona that "furnish[ed] the basic definition and characterization of the nation" as "the main disseminators of the idea and ideals of the nations," and they were "the most avid purveyors and consumers of nationalist myths."¹⁷¹ Ranke thereby imagined himself and

¹⁷⁰ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 126.

¹⁷¹ Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 56.

the German nation as a compound subject evolving in a universal history, studying this subject from a nationalist perspective.

Ranke, as both a historian and a political journalist, argued that the study of history not only served Germans' sociopolitical interests but also validated a peculiar Prussian political agenda regarding the future of German politics.¹⁷² When Ranke was offered a chairmanship in history at the University of Berlin in 1834, an institutional partnership between the historical discipline and the politics of making a Prussocentric Germany was thus established. According to Prussian foreign minister Friedrich Ancillon's remark to the minister of education, Karl von Altenstein, Ranke's promotion was desirable "more in the general interest of the state than in that of the university."¹⁷³ Hence, the Prussian authorities could utilize Ranke's framework of "value-free" historiography as the apparatus for promoting the political interest of the Prussian monarchy. To do so, the Prussian administration granted Ranke exclusive privilege to access institutional archives, which correspondingly enabled Ranke to embark on his "historiographic enterprise"¹⁷⁴ and to continue his discovery of the "uncharted territories" on the maps of history.

Ranke's "great discovery" in history was responsible not only for his professional advancement, but also for propagating an ideology of political conservatism. Yet, when Ranke identified himself as both a professional historian and a public intellectual, each of the identifications carried with them different societal expectations. While professionals are "manifestly political in their self-organization and reliance on the state of regulation," intellectuals "are constructed as potentially above politics allowing their intellectuality to

¹⁷² See, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

¹⁷³ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 105.

¹⁷⁴ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 331.

construct their response to politics even as they engage it.”¹⁷⁵ Therefore, Ranke’s attempt to completely separate the notion of “professional” historians from historians as “intellectuals” could only be accomplished when he was able to maintain a professional “supra-neutrality” with the resources of institutional support. In other words, it was imperative for him to conduct archival research domestically or internationally without being obligated to subordinate himself either to the interests of his sponsors or to any sort of institutional regulations.¹⁷⁶

While Ranke still considered himself as a junior faculty in 1827, he was already aware of his gradual alienation in academic settings: “I am *predestined* to be alone. Also, wherever I am, I will be alone” (emphasis added).¹⁷⁷ At that time, without much institutional support, his Lutheran faith in his predestined calling provided him with comfort during his confrontation with the anxiety of being alienated. However, after the official recognition of his academic work in 1834, the intensity of alienation was further amplified by anticipated social and institutional duties. On the one hand, the adoption of the objective and scientific method of conducting archival research made him detached from his present surroundings. On the other hand, propagating the agenda of political conservatism, which was embedded in the proposal to institutionalize historical scholarship, also alienated the “historical” past from the “political” present.

To manage a conflict-free transition between being a professional historian and the editor of a conservative political periodical, Ranke acknowledged that some subordination to the conservative agenda both on the individual level and in the public

¹⁷⁵ Michael D. Kennedy and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Introduction,” in *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, eds. Suny and Kennedy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 11.

¹⁷⁶ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 198.

¹⁷⁷ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 125.

arena had to be made. By employing therapeutic forgetting, a personal subordination to the Prussian state was necessary to override his personal anxiety of being alienated. This subordination corresponded to Ranke's formation of the tripartite selfhood, through which he was able to identify himself within a larger whole for a greater cause. In Ranke's case, the cause was identical with the historian's pursuit of a "nationalist" need for German "statehood" through revising the German historical discourse. While analyzing Ranke's various introductions to his historical works, this anxiety could only be found in the earlier publications. In his introduction to *History of the Reformation*, he wrote,

Let no one pity a man who devotes himself to the studies that apparently are so dry, and neglects for them the delights of many a joyous days. It is true that the companions of his solitary hours are lifeless papers, but they are the remnants of the life of past ages, which gradually assume form and substance to the eye occupied in the study of them. For me they had a peculiar interest.¹⁷⁸

As Ranke mentioned elsewhere, his purpose for compiling a more "objective" history of the Reformation was to satisfy Germans and German scholars. In this specific introduction, Ranke was "bound to speak to himself,"¹⁷⁹ although this is the historiographical practice that professional historians should make efforts to avoid. As a result, the anxiety of being alienated could be well compensated and rewarding when historians revitalized those lifeless papers by fantasizing a unique correlation between the historical past and the practical interest in the present.

Ranke was personally and professionally bound to the enterprise of building the German nation-state through the study of history, and his construction of a tripartite

¹⁷⁸ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 70.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

selfhood reflected these aims. An important objective of institutionalizing the discipline of history was not only to compile an impartial history for history's sake, but also to educate readers that studying the past could provide them with religious and secular guidance for their present lives. Ranke thereby devoted himself to professionalizing historical scholarship by systematically implementing the seminar format to train future historians. Nevertheless, the academic notion of rigid "scientific" training and an accelerating German industrial revolution further alienated Ranke's private self and public persona. In retrospect he wrote,

Every empire and state is most closely and rapidly linked through the locomotive and telegraph, and the various peoples on the earth equal to a single race. As a result, there are thousands of similarities in connection. There is no longer any absolute separation between the remote parts of the globe. [Then] who will still talk about human life?¹⁸⁰

He thereby acknowledged that historian's principle of impartially disassociating the studied past from the present would further result in a personal loss of individuality.

Sustaining himself with the identification of a tripartite selfhood and with a practical agenda in sight, Ranke embarked on his final project to compile a universal history. This ultimate history would reaffirm that his self-formation could only be soundly secured through understanding the conflicts of powers among nation-states in the theological evolution of world history. Once the historical discipline had been successfully institutionalized, professional historians would no longer feel alienated from the present and the present-oriented "unhistorical" readers of history. More importantly, this new historiography would allow them to associate their identities with individuality,

¹⁸⁰ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 528: "Alle Reiche und Staaten sind durch Lokomotive und Telegraphie in die engste und rascheste Verbindung gesetzt, gleich als ständen die Völker der Erde wie ein einziges Volk. Mit diesem Ergebnis stehen tausend ähnliche in Verbindung. Auf dem weiten Globus gibt es keine absolute Trennung mehr. Wer spricht noch von dem humanen Leben?"

the nation and the universe. But the question still remained: if Ranke attempted to form a tripartite selfhood, where he could identify himself with his own individuality, national community, and the transcendent universe, how could he stabilize this fluid concept of self-formation?

III: Ranke's stabilization of selfhood

Living in a transitional period of German history, Ranke's formation of a tripartite selfhood persistently stayed in a critical state of instability. It fluctuated between a competing allegiance to the old and the new politics, and between the contesting authorities of presenting the historical past in a poetic manner as the men of letters usually did or in a philosophical argumentative fashion as the men of science intended to do. Ranke, always in search of synthesis, framed his construction of selfhood in the binary terms of religious and secular, old and new, subjective and objective. He acknowledged that stabilizing self-formation was a process of searching for a common ground, conceived as a nationalist platform, upon which both a public intellectual and a professional historian could stand. He thereby engaged in a process of utilizing his own personal and professional past to become both a historical "scientist" and an "artist."

To establish himself as a professional historian and to institutionalize the historical discipline, Ranke proposed a new historical narrative through launching a scholarly attack against the old practices of historiography. He candidly criticized Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*, (1561-65; *History of Italy*), and concluded that this mode of historical narrative could not provide the historical truth with meaning. He wrote:

Are the accidental distinctions made by each annual calendar more important than a historian's perspective, which should conform them in all essentials, and allow them to hinder the progress of historian's narrative?¹⁸¹

According to Ranke's conception of history, representing historical events in chronicle format prevented historians from creating coherent narratives as they deduced internal spiritual elements from external facts. Additionally, to contest the universal-philosophical view of history of the Hegelian school, which asserted that a universal mind was somehow dialectically controlling the development of human history by manifesting itself in nations, laws and arts, Ranke stated that the professional historian should investigate metaphysical ideas by adapting the systematic knowledge of science (the way of philosophy) in order to present ideas in an aesthetic manner (the way of poetry) and ultimately to recognize the working of individuality in history, which deserved a unique perspective of interpretation.¹⁸² Ranke strived to search for an alternative platform that would better accommodate his ideal vision of history, in which "the infinite in the finiteness is depicted as it unfolds itself as an idea and yields to the whole, located, and delivered before our eyes and minds (*Gemüt*)."¹⁸³

When Ranke socially identified himself as a political journalist, he also left significant indications of his search for a working synthesis to stabilize his political identification during the period of political transition of the Prussian monarchy. After the Revolution of 1830, Ranke argued, "[m]y intention was merely to fight for the position

¹⁸¹ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 82.

¹⁸² Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 87. For young Ranke's notion of threefold revision of history, see J. D. Braw, "Vision as Revision: Ranke and the Beginning of Modern History," *History and Theory* 46 (2007), 45-60.

¹⁸³ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 234.

midway between the two systems which was already occupied by the Prussian state.”¹⁸⁴

In the later years, Ranke retrospectively reiterated his choice of the alternative political stance as an expression of his dissatisfaction with the current political development in the 1830s:

At that time, the direction that I adopted was neither revolution nor reaction. I had an expiating undertaking to bring up a third opinion ... between these two [directions] in either public or private statements, which linked to the existence that was based upon the present and could be suitable to establish a future, in which one can justify new ideas if they contain truth. The task was essentially beyond my power. How deceptive I saw myself when I had thought that everyone should actually have to agree with me!¹⁸⁵

Although his political stance was not well received, Ranke persistently considered his approach to comprehending the historical past as part the indispensable apparatus for legitimately constructing an alternative political orientation for the Prussian monarchy. When the opportunity of being an editor for a political journal arrived, Ranke took this career change as inevitable and assumed that the fundamental duty of a political journalist was essentially the same as the duty of professional historian.

Ranke argued that both occupations dealt with identical subject matters; that is, factual information in the past and the present. A “fact” was the documented evidence of the current socio-political condition and that of the historical past. Both historian and political journalist were expected to recognize, to penetrate, and to represent the facts

¹⁸⁴ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 45.

¹⁸⁵ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 50: “Die Richtung, die ich einschlug, war nun aber weder Revolution noch Reaction. Ich hatte das sühne Unterfangen, zwischen den beiden einander in jeder öffentlichen oder privaten Aeußerung ... eine dritte zu Worte bringen zu wollen, welche an das Bestehende anknüpfte, das, auf dem Vorangegangenen beruhend, eine Zukunft eröffnete, in der man auch auf den neuen Ideen, insofern sie Wahrheit enthielten, gerecht werden konnte. Das Unternehmen ging eigentlich über meine Kräfte; wie sehr sah ich mich getäuscht, wenn ich gemeint hatte, eigentlich müsse mir jedermann beistimmen!”

and, eventually, to comprehend the “true lesson” through realization of the facts.¹⁸⁶ The professionally trained historian ideally acted as an unbiased political journalist for the German public. Ranke wrote:

Historians must overall be foreign to partisanship, and should generally have the talent to comprehend the subject objectively. So historians can apply the same approach to their present time. We [the historians] proceed our case with abstinence of all preconceived opinions. Theoretically, the duty could be scientifically detached. We must understand our duty as extensively as possible, and we should not produce any thoughts and news ...¹⁸⁷

Accordingly, the historian would be able to extend his or her impartial view on past events to the understanding of present politics.

Historians’ comprehension of contemporary politics was fundamentally based upon his or her interpretation of the historical past. Ranke’s scientific approach of interpreting the German past validated his political stance, which suggested that the image of a unified German nation could be essentially analyzed as a midpoint solution to the polarized discourse of nineteenth century European politics. He argued, “The German kingdom stands between two oppositions because it has allied with Roman ideas over constitution and administration, and allied with personal elements.”¹⁸⁸ Ranke’s investigation of the past and the present politics made him acknowledge the dichotomy between the “old” nation from above, exemplified by the Roman Empire, and the *modern* nation-state from below encouraged by the French Revolutionary enthusiasts. He further

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 258.

¹⁸⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 117: “Parteilichkeit muß dem Historiker überall fremd sein, und hat er überhaupt das Talent, den Gegenstand objectiv zu erfassen, so kann er das auch in der neusten Zeit. Mit Enthaltung aller vorgefaßten Meinung schreiten wir zur Sache. Soll dis Aufgabe aber wissenschaftlich gelöst werden, müssen wir unsere Aufgabe so umfassend als möglich lösen, und nicht der Gedanke, ein Neues zu produzieren ...”

¹⁸⁸ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 2: *Über die Epochen der Neueren Geschichte: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, eds. Theodoe Schieder and Helmut Berdings (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1971), 156.

explained, the old kingdoms “depend upon a known law of succession; the modern states exclusively emerge from the crowd. These two principles stand against each other as two worlds, and the modern world disposes of nothing but the conflict between these two.”¹⁸⁹ If the historian played a critical role in the project of nation building of the nineteenth century, the German historian would have to stabilize German politics and prevent further political conflicts. Ranke’s expansion of the historian’s duty to incorporate the responsibilities of a political journalist effectively settled the contemporary debates of German politics and his political identification as well.

Ranke’s attempt to imagine a harmonious identity was not as stable as it seemed. He was aware that his tripartite selfhood could not be completely harmonized by his conviction of the ideal midway position between the old and new discourses of history and politics. These discourses were both dependent upon an overarching idea which suggested that the acknowledgement of the facts in the past or the present could be possible only if there was a transcendent truth serving as the foundation of all knowledge. Ranke’s recognition of the truth was another attempt to synthesize the secular “scientific” truth and the transcendent truth embedded in the theological *Weltanschauung*. Due to the fact that the historian was not able to comprehend the knowledge of the past in its entirety, he or she was only able to adapt scientific approaches to studying the lifeless historical documents and to reveal what might “actually” have happened in the past. The foundation of “the scientific knowledge of nature and that of man,” as Ranke suggested, was thereby based upon the “pure religion,” which responded “to the needs of human

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 417.

spirit.”¹⁹⁰ In other words, with the mundane and religious satisfaction in the human spirit, Ranke could proceed to comprehend his environment, including the human past.

Conversely, in order to build a concrete faith in the “pure religion” as the foundation to stabilize his tripartite selfhood, Ranke contended that his new approach to studying history was the only way of acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of the past. He employed this approach as an experiment based on God’s guidance to reveal the truth upon which the formation of any identities had to depend. He noted that although this experiment might “promise no general sympathies,” an unyielding faith in God would facilitate his production of “little perception” of history.¹⁹¹ With divine guidance, he could show no sympathy to any epoch, because God had helped him overcome all obstacles and assigned him to comprehend all the inner, including infinitesimal, connections among historical events. Therefore, as a professional historian, his or her job was

to get through [history] on the basis of His existence and to present [history] with absolute objectivity. ... Certainly, the historian recognizes the principle of movement as evolution not as revolution ... Only God knows the universal history. ... We could ... only approach Him from distance. But yet, there is explicitly a unity, a process, and a development existing for us.¹⁹²

Historian was expected to provide a discursive trajectory that helped mankind not only to stabilize the self-formation, but also to associate the human past and present with meanings. As Ranke once argued, “All the lessons (*Lehren*) are the remembering from

¹⁹⁰ Ranke, *Universal History: the Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*, ed. G. W. Prothero (New York: Harper & Brother, 1885), 21.

¹⁹¹ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 271.

¹⁹² Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 81-83: “sie bis auf Grund ihrer Existenz zu durchdringen und mit völliger Objektivität darzustellen. ... Allerdings erkennt der Historiker das Prinzip der Bewegung an, aber als Evolution, nicht als Revolution ... Die Weltgeschichte weiß allein Gott. ... können wir ... uns nur vor fern ihnen nahen. Deutlich aber ist doch für uns ein Einheit, ein Fortgang, ein Entwicklung vorhanden.”

God's legend of the present and our time.”¹⁹³ The historian's narrative of the past was essentially a retrospective discourse of commemorating the legacy of the divine plan of universe.

Being a public intellectual with a sociopolitical conscience, Ranke was also aware that his present political concerns and preferences could obstruct his public identification as a professional historian with impartiality. During the European Revolutions of 1848, he once thought he might lose the ability to conduct objective historical inquiry by detaching himself from the present and maintaining a state of neutrality in isolated archives without being disturbed. Yet, to weather the critical transition of German politics, like other German intellectuals, Ranke sought a particular solution from the past, and “drew two fundamental lessons from the readings of the past — history meant change, and it meant conflict.”¹⁹⁴ He argued that the historian should stand in a unique position, which would allow him to recognize both ends of political debates, to identify current political conflict and crisis, and to provide his contemporaries with historical guidance without disclosing his personal political preference. Ranke noted, “The most popular and perhaps the most effective historians live on the dividing line between republic and monarchy. ... My sympathies have long been for monarchy ... but I have never adhered to any specific and narrowly limited form of monarchy.”¹⁹⁵ Accordingly, this particular stance to better associate the historical past with the political present, as

¹⁹³ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, eds. H. Bernhard Hoelt and Hans Herzfeld (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 18.

¹⁹⁴ Brian E. Vick, *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 54.

¹⁹⁵ Quote from Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 302.

Theodore Laue suggested, later shaped Ranke's concept of historical interpretation as a discursive mode of "rest-in-motion" (*Ruhe in der Bewegung*).¹⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the temporal dynamics of historical understanding, underlined by the historian, were not entirely about the present. It was essentially about the future established by a forward-looking orientation. In his criticism of nihilism, which emphasized that "the future is nothing, the past is nothing and the present is all," Ranke asserted that historians have to "restrict" their temporal orientation "only to the past and present," when dealing with their subject matters.¹⁹⁷ Namely, although historians did not have any control over the future, they should endeavor to comprehend the historical tendency or force that predominantly dictates the development of the future.

When the Prussian state successfully accomplished the political unification of Germany and stabilized German politics in 1871, Ranke, four years later, belatedly revealed his resolution to dissolve the possible conflicts between two social identities, which prohibited him from being "productive" and "regenerative" simultaneously.¹⁹⁸ It reminded him that, even with a specific nationalist agenda in mind, he still needed to "interpret" and "show" how the past essentially happened. He thereby concluded his career and wrote, "A great epoch demands its own historian. But not all epochs can find a suitable interpreter for the events, in which the events could be carried out by him [the historian]."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Laue, *Leopold von Ranke*, 50

¹⁹⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 457.

¹⁹⁸ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 489.

¹⁹⁹ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, eds. Alfred Dove, Theodor Wiedermann and Goerg Winter (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1883-1888), vol. 2, I: 389.

As a professional historian living during the nascent development of modern nationalism, Ranke's self-formation was a process of recognizing a tripartite selfhood in which the individual and the modern nation manifested themselves in a theologically transcending universe. With the strategic employment of therapeutic forgetting, Ranke first subordinated his private self to public persona in the name of serving a greater good. However, this transition did not happen effortlessly, and it was accompanied by a potential conflict between a professional historian's disengaged self and an intellectual's conscious focus on maintaining a particular political interest. With ample support from the Prussian authorities, Ranke was able to utilize criticism of documents and aesthetic presentation, and pronounced a teleological interpretation for the national past of Germany. It was this grand narrative of German national history that seamlessly supported Prussia's leadership in the integration of the entire German region and, at the same time, enabled the entire German population, and above all Ranke himself, to become national.

CHAPTER 3 - From *Kulturnation* to *Staatsnation*: The Construction of German National Identity as a Prussocentric *Kleindeutschland*

Throughout his career as proponent of a Prussian-led German unification, Ranke imagined himself as the personification of a public space for German politics. In doing so, he ventured to reconcile the formation of a tripartite selfhood with his vision of German nationhood, where individuality, national community and the universe intertwined harmoniously together. He once claimed, “the study of my life is the history of the German nation.”²⁰⁰ Believing that the process of German nation and state-building integral to forming a collective national identity depended upon the institutionalization of the historical profession, Ranke was at the forefront of this initiative. Through the strategic employment of therapeutic forgetting, his construction of German national identity also underwent a similar process of “becoming national.” Accordingly, this chapter will document not merely this process but also the changing political agenda of similarly minded German intellectuals.

Following the French Revolution, conceptions of modern German nationhood had been articulated and debated both in public and in private among educated Germans. It was Napoleon’s invasion of the German states in 1806 that marked the moment of “national awakening” and the turning point in the conceptualization of German nationhood. Believing in the image of a unified German nation, German nationalists had

²⁰⁰ Leopold von Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walter Peter Fuchs (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 29.

actively participated in the political process of nation-building and engaged in an intellectual battle of defining the national identity of Germany.²⁰¹

The formation of the German idea of nationhood, as Friedrich Meinecke asserted, was a process that evolved from one of the *Kulturnation* to that of *Staatsnation*.²⁰² German nationalists actively sought the transition from cultural nationhood to the political nation-state by attempting to establish the popular recognition of a centralized monarchy that was capable of demonstrating its military strength in the process of building a cohesively unified German nation. To realign their sociopolitical allegiance from an ethno-cultural Germany to the “yet-to-be” German nation-state, nation-builders were compelled to invent an historical foundation for the formation of a primordial German identity, one rooted in communal connections among Germans. They attested that this new German identity, which aimed to unconditionally supersede all others, could provide the political apparatus for justifying a smooth transition to a *de facto* political nation-state. Accordingly, the German struggle for national identity presented a beneficial environment for Ranke’s establishment of the German historical science in the context of conservative nationalist aspirations.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Michael Hughes, “Fiat justitia, pereat Germania? The imperial supreme jurisdiction and imperial reform in the later Holy Roman Empire,” in *The State of Germany: The National Idea in the Making, Unmaking and Remaking of a Modern Nation-State*, ed. John Breuilly (London: Longman, 1992), 31.

²⁰² Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the national states*, trans. Robert B. Kimber (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).

²⁰³ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 229.

I: An imagined Germany: German identity in transition

The modern concept of a German national identity originated in the late eighteenth century. When German luminaries such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Friedrich Schlegel spoke of appreciating the mixed ethnic and cultural heritage of Germany, they asserted a more cosmopolitan vision of Germany's place in the nucleus of the development of European civilization.²⁰⁴ Yet, the absence of a strong sense of national unity made it difficult to define either the cultural or political borders of Germany. Thus, as Alon Confino argues, this non-existence “opened a space for the bourgeoisie to shape national identity in their own image.”²⁰⁵ For example, in his *Das Deutsch Reich* (1795), the German poet Friedrich Schiller wrote, “Germany? But where is it? I know the land could not be found. Abandon the politics [first], and then the scholar can begin [to locate Germany].”²⁰⁶ Similarly, the young Hegel also considered Germany to be “a shadow state, a state of imagination.”²⁰⁷ If educated Germans could not confidently identify Germany as a unified political entity, as Hagen Schulze suggests, many of them would chose to identify the German nation as “merely a vision of the future that could be glimpsed only in a common language and culture: a utopia adumbrated in historical sources, dim, and appealing more to emotions than to the reason.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Brian Vick, “The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *German Studies Review* 26 (2003), 241-242.

²⁰⁵ Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 31.

²⁰⁶ Friedrich Schiller, “*Das Deutsch Reich*,” accessed January 5, 2011, <http://www.zeno.org/nid/20005599458>.

²⁰⁷ Hughes, “Fiat justitia, pereat Germania?” 31.

²⁰⁸ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations, and Nationalism: From the Middle Age to the Present*, trans. William Yuill (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 157.

Because a politically unified German nation did not exist, it could only be located in the past or the future. German intellectuals needed to depict the formation of the German nation as a process of sovereign becoming. Thus, German intellectuals turned to the idea of a cultural nationalism that was primarily articulated by the German romanticists in the late eighteenth century. They argued that the concepts of “national character,” “national spirit” (*Nationalgeist*) and “nationalist feeling” (*Nationalgefühl*) could be considered fundamental components in constructing a hegemonic German identity within “a heterogeneous, multicultural, and multilingual populace living within the borders of the long disintegrated Holy Roman Empire.”²⁰⁹ As a result, the formation of a cohesive *Kulturnation* was based upon a collective vision of the nation’s future. A “yet-to-be” unified Germany would be a national community united by a homogeneous German history and language, which all the residents of the fragmented German region would share with conformity. This discourse of *Kulturnation* enabled the identification of the German nation as a homogeneous culture, within the territory constituted by numerous political states of varying sizes. Additionally, it imagined a parallel existence between a collective, unified German nation and an individual’s patriotism towards his or her respective state.

However, in the wake of Napoleon’s attack on the German region, the discourse of *Kulturnation* proved to be inadequate in responding to the pressing issues of sovereign statehood. In 1806, Napoleon called for sixteen German states to form the Confederation of the Rhine (*Rheinbund*, 1806-1813) and to secede from the Holy Roman Empire (962-1806). In March of the same year, he forced Francis II to abdicate as Holy Roman

²⁰⁹ Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 94.

Emperor and dissolved the Empire. The very existence of a politically fragmented and yet culturally unified German nation was under Napoleonic military threat. A new discourse of German ethno-cultural nationalism was needed to overcome the humiliation of the Napoleonic wars and the wars of national liberation against the French.²¹⁰ The anti-French hysteria of the Napoleonic occupation in the German region awakened Germans' dormant sense of national identity and compelled German intellectuals, such as Ernst Moritz Arndt and Heinrich von Kleist, to contemplate the definition of the German nation by asking urgent questions such as "What is Germany?" and "Where is Germany?"²¹¹ Therefore, the romanticist and cosmopolitan recognition of the historical assimilation of German heritage with a foreign ethnic and cultural influence was increasingly masked by an increasingly chauvinistic national identity, which highlighted the "autarkic exclusion" of Germany in order to disconnect any German association with the foreign people.²¹²

The immediate threat of French invasion made it imperative to stabilize the notion of German national identity as a fixed essence, so that a collective sense of "self-preservation" could be propagated. As Johann Gottlieb Fichte proposed, in order to protect the very existence of the German nation, the idea of German nationhood needed to be settled as an ethnocentric national community, *Volksgemeinschaft*, which was

²¹⁰ Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.

²¹¹ The question was first time introduced into public discussion in Heinrich von Kleist's "*Katechismus der Deutschen*" (The German Catechism) of 1809 and in Ernst Moritz Arndt's poem "*Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland*" (The German Fatherland) of 1813.

²¹² Vick, "The Origins of the German Volk," 241.

“sufficiently united within itself by a common language and a common way of thinking, and sharply enough severed from the other peoples.”²¹³

Upon the Grande Armée’s defeat and withdrawal from the region in 1815, the Austrian Prince Klemens von Metternich invited European diplomats to convene at the Congress of Vienna to restore the supremacy of European monarchical powers. The signatories of the Treaty of Vienna reorganized the German states by creating the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*, 1815-1866), which was constituted by an alliance of thirty-nine states of varying size, and predominately supervised by the Austrian monarchy. The continuous lack of an effective political sovereignty in the German region again obstructed the response of educated Germans’ to the awakening of a sense of German national identity. To mobilize a collective national sentiment intended to define the German *Kulturnation*, they could only continue stressing the essential uniformity of German characteristics and cultural attributes.

Looking for antecedents in German religion and culture that formulated the German national identity, Ranke suggested that *Kulturnation* was not a new concept. In a letter to the crown prince Maximilian of Bavaria, Ranke wrote: “People have been repeatedly talking about an imagined unity of Germany; [but] sometimes [they] have forgotten the necessity and harmony beyond this imagination.”²¹⁴ Ranke acknowledged that the forerunners of cultural nationalism had “contributed infinitely to the formation of national consciousness.”²¹⁵ He then contended that, with sufficient historical

²¹³ Johan Gottlieb Fichte, “Addresses to the German Nation, 1806,” accessed 17 April 2009, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1806fichte.html>.

²¹⁴ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 132.

²¹⁵ Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, trans. and ed. Roger Wines (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 36-37.

investigation, a solid German national identity could be justifiably established or invented.

Unlike German romantic nationalists who had been searching for a comprehensive nationalistic inspiration from the immediate German past, Ranke sought older historical origins, going back to the sixteenth century. He argued that when Martin Luther attempted to establish the Lutheran Church across the German region, and to nationalize German vernacular culture, a more exclusive German identity took root in the “depths of the nation,” which had been embedded in “an older style of language.”²¹⁶ In addition to identifying the proliferation of a common language as the foundation for the cultural definition of Germany, Ranke, following the German linguistic tradition, suggested that the German national consciousness was deeply rooted in the German past with Luther’s advocacy of the German vernacular, supplanting Latin as the primary written language.²¹⁷

Ranke, as a professional historian, was not only initiating a secular and objective historical investigation of Luther’s reformation, but was also presenting Luther as a founding father of the German *Kulturnation*. In seeking the historical origins of his own national identity, Ranke identified the German Reformation both as the German attempt to challenge the universal theological dominance of the Catholic Church, and as a secular nationalist movement that engendered a collective identity of a German *Kulturnation*. Ranke considered his study as intending to examine Luther’s “life and scholarship that established and contributed so much to ... the national consciousness (*nationalen*

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 3: *Frühe Schriften*, ed., Walther Peter Fuchs with collaboration of Gunter Berg and Volker Dotterweich (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1973), 322.

Sinne).²¹⁸ As a result, Luther's personal and public involvement in the formation of a German national consciousness enabled Ranke to draw a parallel comparison between Luther's career and his own formations of a tripartite selfhood and the German national identity.

Inspired by Luther and the idea of the historical *Kultur* nation, Ranke elaborated upon the historicist concept of nation-building. He argued that the making of a modern nation was not an imminent result of "natural growth"²¹⁹ but "the first product of history"²²⁰ and a deliberate cultural construction. In addition to its geographic location and availability of natural resources, a modern nation was constituted by its unique cultural format as well as its long historical development. In his studies of European nations, he wrote,

The nations are not entirely created by nature. Nationalities of such great power and unique culture, such as the English or Italians, are not much the product of their own land and race. They are the results of great changes of [historical] events.²²¹

Clearly, before Ranke could identify Germany as a unified political nation that did not exist on the political map of Europe, he needed to imagine the German nation as an ethno-cultural construct. In a historical comparison between the German and other

²¹⁸ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, ed., Alfred Dove (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890), 59.

²¹⁹ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, eds. Alfred Dove, Theodor Wiedermann and Goerg Winter (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1883-1888), vol. 1, I: ix.

²²⁰ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, eds. Volker Dotterweich and Walther Peter Fuchs (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1975), 355.

²²¹ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 250.

European nations, he explicitly commented that: “We [the Germans] were never a nation in our deepest nature, so we would not conform ourselves to one [political nation].”²²²

In his formulation of the nation, Ranke identified three critical components that defined it in a modern sense. He argued that a nation ought to “grasp the general spirit (*allgemeinen Geist*), maintain its independence, and be retroactive according to the general spirit. Based upon these three requirements, a nation should be historical.”²²³

The general spirit was the foundation that made the cultural tradition of a nation possible. The core of national tradition was comprised of various fables and stories, which had been told in folk-languages from generation to generation since the beginning of the nation’s past, critically examined by historians, and incorporated as indispensable ingredients of the “national histories” that evolved in conjunction with the general history of the universe (*allgemeinen Geschichte*).

Although Ranke’s understanding of the German *Kulturnation* had its historical essence, he recognized that two technological advancements of the mid-fifteenth century — printing and weaponry — accelerated the process of constructing a shared general spirit within the modern nation. Because of the innovation of printing, intellectuals could not only manufacture the national spirit “as a higher idea” through their establishment of “scholarship” and “cultural corporations” (*geistlichen Korporationen*), but could also utilize the technology to generate an “identical centralizing impact” to that the invention of cannons (*Geschütze*) had on the emergence of European power politics

²²² Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, eds. Walther Peter Fuchs and Theodor Schieder (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1964), 264.

²²³ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 274.

(*Machtpolitik*).²²⁴ Ranke's analogy between the cannons and print culture further implied that national identity was not merely a cultural formation, but also an institutional construction induced by the nation's desire to dominate European politics through developing military strength.

The competition for political dominance prompted European nations, regardless of their various military and technological developments, to be conscious of the urgent statist needs to propagate a communal sense of belonging and national preservation.

Ranke noted that

... the domination, which other nations threaten to exercise over us, can only be countered by the development of our own nation. I do not mean an invented chimerical nation, but an actual, essential one, which is expressed in the [format of a political] state.²²⁵

He therefore acknowledged that the imagined *Kulturnation* could only be essentially manifested on the platform of a sovereign nation. To instill a *Nationalgefühl* and a collective sense of belonging, and to confront potential foreign threats, the nation needed a strong military force and a centralized administration. Ranke thus outlined a plan to advocate Prussian state's competence in the construction of a German nation-state.

Additionally, Ranke examined the cultural implications of German intellectuals' construction of the German *Nationalgefühl*. He asserted that a distinct national literature could differentiate Germans from others. He wrote,

[t]he language differed not only from every race, but also from every person in the same race.

Every race has its own idea and folk-language. The general idea, through which the general

²²⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 2: *Über die Epochen der Neueren Geschichte: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, eds. Theodoe Schieder and Helmut Berdings (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1971), 281.

²²⁵ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 154.

language became known, developed the general poetry that would pronounce itself aloud as a great folk poem (*Volkgedicht*).²²⁶

In other words, a national folk-language should be considered the primary distinguisher of the ethno-cultural distinction among nationalities. A national language also prepared the principal foundation for establishing a national literature through which a collective national consciousness could be effectively articulated and disseminated.

The national consciousness was conveniently identified through works of national literature, such as folk songs, poetry, and national history, which were written, recited and sung in a nationalized dialect. The national literature thus could be “transformed into a national possession” that “preserved the vivid memories,” and “depicted the past, which people have forgotten.”²²⁷ In 1813, during the Napoleonic occupation, Ranke specifically attested that a national literature, such as poetry, had to incorporate three elements: “general humanity, nationality and autonomy.”²²⁸ These critical components of national literature were indispensable not only to the compilation of a national history, but also to the nationalist efforts to gather the nation as a unified whole. Notably, Ranke’s articulation of the relevance of national literature coincided with his construction of a tripartite selfhood, which was specifically orientated towards the process of becoming national under state auspices.

²²⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 3: *Frühe Schriften*, 69: “... die Sprache ist verschieden, nicht nur bei jedem Volke verschieden, sondern bei jedem Menschen desselben Volks verschieden. Jedes Volk hat seine eignen Ideen, seine eigne Volkssprache. Die allgemeinen Ideen, durch die allgemeine Sprache kund geworden, bilden allgemeine Poesie, ein großes Volkgedichts, das sich laut ausspricht.”

²²⁷ Ranke, *Die serbische Revolution, aus serbischen Papieren und Mittheilung* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1829), 40.

²²⁸ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 3: *Frühe Schriften*, 71.

II: Ranke's concept of national identity

The German conception of an ethno-cultural nation provided Ranke with a theoretical foundation for his own national identity. Theoretically, Ranke's concept of national identity was seamlessly connected to Johann Fichte's idea of national rivals, which inspired him to identify unique German characteristics.²²⁹ However, unlike Fichte's propagation of German national identity, which attempted to integrate national politics with religious doctrine, Ranke redefined the relationship between Christianity and the German nations.²³⁰ He acknowledged that the growing secularization of European politics prevented a universalist Christian theology from sufficiently reflecting individual national interests in their competition for political dominance among European nations. Ranke's concept of national identity was thereby an attempt to synthesize the imagery of an ethno-cultural Germany with the notion of a unified German nation-state led by the Prussian monarchy. This concept demanded Ranke's implementation of a therapeutic forgetting that would subordinate personal self-identification to a complementary collective national consciousness for the purpose of justifying a political cause.

This additional political application of Ranke's tripartite selfhood to the process of becoming national made him aware that human beings could only recognize their existence by associating themselves with supra-personal communities in which both individual and universal wills were manifested. He concluded that man instantly acquired a higher value once his personal existence was associated with this larger body.

²²⁹ Johann G. Fichte, "Thirteenth Address, 1806," in his *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. George A. Kelly (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1968), 19091, 19394 and 19798.

²³⁰ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 59.

In acknowledging and observing the general rules of interpersonal community, a particular personal quality was shaped, which made distinctive personal subjection and military subordination possible.²³¹ Ranke asserted that “when all the energies of a nation give voluntary obedience to its commands,” the entire nation would “wield all its resources” to sustain its competitive edge for domination in the age of power politics.²³² He further contended that all European nations were supported by a civil “obedience to the government” which was “based upon [individual] voluntary subordination.”²³³ Accordingly, the personal implementation of therapeutic forgetting was a “conscious necessity.” It allowed a person to voluntarily subject themselves to a supra-personal community, such as a national community embodied in a political sovereignty. In his study of the development of Papal States during the Reformation, Ranke noted that it was human beings’ “double ego” that craved self-recognition and a sense of belonging to a greater community (a nation), which was “powerful enough and independent,” and a “great institution,” which was “blooming, rich, better, and civilized.”²³⁴

Ranke’s association of *Kultur* with statecraft suggested that it was the duty of political administrations to implement various programs to induce citizens’ voluntary subordination to the collective fulfillment of the national cause. To achieve this objective, national leaders and administrators needed to learn from Alexander the Great, who successfully instituted political and cultural programs that reconciled the logical

²³¹ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte* [Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg and History of Prussia, during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries], trans. Sir Alex and Lady Duff Gordon (London: John Murray, 1849), vol. 1, 429.

²³² Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, trans. Sarah Austin (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1844), 147.

²³³ Ranke, *History of the Popes: Their Church and State*, trans. E. Fowler (1901; repr., New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), vol. 1, 298.

²³⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 90.

disconnect between citizens' veneration of national sovereignty and the individual freedom of ancient Greece.²³⁵ This institutional reconciliation did not mean that the claims of a sovereign nation needed to supersede individual freedom in order to sustain its autonomy. Rather, it implied that a politically unified Germany was only achievable when the new nation-state recognized the independence of both regional and individual residents.

Ranke imagined the German nation not only as an institutional protector of the comprehensive individuality and freedom of citizens, but also as a political and cultural unit endowed with a collective national consciousness and the culmination of the universal spirit. Taking the creation of national literature as an example, he argued that a “disagreeable boredom” and a loss of individuality would result if various kinds of literatures were merged without taking national consciousness into consideration.²³⁶ More importantly, the fulfillment of universal humanity depended upon the institutional recognition of individuality and the encouragement of harmonious competition among individuals “without any overpowering or injuring of others” while stimulating “one another in a most dynamic and relentless way.”²³⁷

In Ranke's view, German political institutions needed to use the German language as a stimulus toward national independence in order to cultivate a German national culture. Ranke asserted that the function of national language was to enable the sovereign nation to “feel independent” and to “develop freely.”²³⁸ However, when Ranke

²³⁵ Ranke, *Universal History: the Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*, ed. G. W. Prothero (New York: Harper & Brother, 1885), 426.

²³⁶ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 155.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 142.

investigated the German past, he noticed that some German administrators, such as the eighteenth-century Francophile, Prussian King Frederick II, had consistently neglected to utilize the German language and literature in these ways. King Frederick II thus failed to exploit auspicious historical moments to further advance the German project of nation-building and to secure German sovereignty and freedom. This administrative lapse led Ranke to reevaluate the critical factors needed to construct a sovereign nation.

In his study of the national and social revolution of the Serbian people between 1804 and 1817, Ranke argued that an ethno-cultural nation focused upon material and cultural advancement could not guarantee its freedom while confronting the growing number of foreign threats. He wrote, “A people unceasingly offering opposition to more advanced nations, for the purpose of maintaining its own freedom, cannot be influenced by those impressions which would, otherwise, be much to its [material] advantages.”²³⁹ Therefore, it was not the desire for material progress, but rather the need to distinguish between natives and foreigners that incited a nation to pursue national freedom.

When nations provoked each other, a self-preservation instinct emerged. Although the instinct sometimes was wrong, immoral and potentially violent,²⁴⁰ the national administration could utilize it to focus on the construction of an institutional awareness of national distinctiveness and a communal sense of belonging. Ranke argued that the collective acts of self and national preservation performed in the national past essentially evolved in parallel with the development of a universal history. He wrote, “History could

²³⁹ Ranke, *The History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*, trans. Mrs. Alexander Kerr (London: Henry G. Dohn, 1853), 12.

²⁴⁰ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 3: *Frühe Schriften*, 69.

not develop on national grounds alone, for it is not till they come into contact with one another that nations become conscious of their own existence.”²⁴¹

Accordingly, the processes of self-formation and the formation of national identity should be identical. A person’s self-awareness was first introduced by a notion of “otherness,” merged with a communal sense of belonging, ultimately facilitating the construction of national identity. The formation of a national identity reinforced individuals’ awareness of the idiosyncratic distinction between the collective nationalized self and the notion of being “foreign.” Since German values should not be diluted, Ranke concluded that this unique and exclusive German “national spirit” depended upon the “conscious exclusion of foreigners.”²⁴²

While European nations advanced their political influences over others, Ranke observed that an intensified foreign threat made the formation of German national identity a critical necessity. This identity originated from the communal needs for national independence and for the preservation of the domestic and spiritual characteristics of the nation. He argued that, “The nationalities differ from one another. They strive in accordance with independent issue, mainly the opposition against the Papacy, and with specific inner configuration.”²⁴³ Although Ranke believed that a universal/general principle instructed the external advancement of nation’s independence, he underlined that “an inner force” dictated how national independence should be sustained in the “dependent process of national creation.”²⁴⁴ In the case of the

²⁴¹ Ranke, *Universal History*, 309.

²⁴² Ranke, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche, Neue Sammlung*, eds. Alfred Dove and Theodor Wiedemann (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1888), 524.

²⁴³ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 8, I: 159.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 206.

transformation of German nationhood, it was the domestic “contradiction between religious notions and civil duties, which no longer ran concurrently as formerly, made it necessary for every man to seek out his own course independently.”²⁴⁵ The transition of national identity of Germany from the cultural nationalism to political nationalism thus began.

Ranke considered national identity to be both an autonomous individuality and a collective whole. It not only substituted for religious faith, but also commingled itself with other cultural and political elements that contributed to the formation of the German national consciousness. He contended that,

with patriotism, science and religion are becoming one. Each makes up as a whole. In fact, [a person could be] a Hessian (*ein Hesse*), a German (*ein Deutscher*), [and] a Christian Teuton (*ein Christlich-Germene*) with a full awareness of everything as little as one another.²⁴⁶

For Ranke, the political mode of belonging had priority. A national identity was literally the highest synthesis, superseding all others, which needed to be independently recognized and integrated harmoniously into the national cause.

Ranke proposed a notion of German consciousness that intended to distinguish its own nationality from others. It also promised a perfect synthesis of the individual pursuit of personal freedom and the collective sustainability of national independence. Thus, to complete the transition from identifying Germany as a *Kulturnation* to seeing it as a unified *Staatsnation*, Ranke suggested that public intellectuals, especially educators, should be responsible for implementing this transformation seamlessly toward the “new”

²⁴⁵ Ranke, *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, trans. M. A. Garvey (London: Richard Bentley, 1852; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1973), vol. 2, 6.

²⁴⁶ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 578: “... Wissenschaft und Religion waren in ihm Eins mit dem Patriotismus; alles bildete ein Ganzes; er war ja ein Hesse, ein Deutscher, vor allen Dingen ein Christlich-Germene mit vollem Bewußtsein wie kaum ein zweiter.”

national identity. If the political unity of Germany was not presently possible, to construct a “yet-to-be” national identity educators “must step in ... independently and keenly [to] create a novelty (*das Neu*) [of national consciousness],” which would “attach us with a glorified *Volker* of the ancient time,” “make ourselves understand altogether,” and “build our will with inevitable forces towards a definite [national] goal.”²⁴⁷ Thus, Ranke concluded that the national trajectory of a prosperous future was dependent upon the emphasis of the glorified past of the nation.

The teleological discourse of the national past, according to Ranke, would enable citizens to identify themselves as a historical whole and thus to sacrifice themselves for a greater cause. As a student of classics, Ranke acknowledged the imperative role that history played not only in the educational system of ancient Greece and Rome but also in the formation of a “new” nation. On October 7, 1824, in his farewell speech as a gymnasium teacher of classics, Ranke redefined his interdependent relationship toward the state, the public, teachers and students. He argued that the public needed more practical knowledge to advance the welfare of humanity and to *forget about the past*. To protect citizens’ freedom of developing their talent and to defend the spiritual lives of the entire nation, the state needed to cautiously monitor society’s progress by establishing an intimate relationship with the scholarly community.²⁴⁸ This redefinition signified that Ranke’s career change was not merely a shift of focus of constructing his tripartite selfhood, but also a process of exporting his self-formation to a national level.

²⁴⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 3: *Frühe Schriften*, 493.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 620.

III: Becoming national: Ranke's identity shift from cultural nation to political nation-state

In his construction of German identity, as a professional historian sanctioned by the Prussian state, Ranke endeavored to interpret his personal history and the German past in terms of a national culture and politics in order to complete the process of “becoming national.” During this process, he experienced the constant political fragmentation in the region. Since the creation of the German Confederation in 1815, its two largest and most powerful members, the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia, dominated the functioning of the loose but indissoluble union. Both states, with their distinctive visions of Germany, not only competed for the leadership of the future political unification of the German states, but also struggled to maintain the legitimacy of the *ancien régime*.

Since that time, there was an intensifying movement of liberalism. For example, German liberal intellectuals and students' nationalist clubs, or *Burschenschaften* (German Student Organizations) attempted to promote a unified German nation-state, as well as freedom, rights and democracy. To suppress liberals' demands, the mastermind of the European Restorative era, the Austrian Prince Klemens von Metternich, introduced the Carlsbad Decrees in 1819 to dissolve the *Burschenschaften*, and to implement university inspections as well as press censorship to limit their activities. At the behest of Metternich, all of the German states endorsed the Decrees in 1819. In Prussia, through the proclamation of 1819 and the decrees of 1822, an enhanced bureaucratic power was

deployed to reinforce the state's commitment to the increasing restrictions on secondary and higher education.²⁴⁹

Born in Saxony and teaching in Prussia, Ranke initially responded to the decrees by eschewing loyalty to the Prussian monarchy. In a letter to a gymnasium teacher in Munich, Friedrich Thiersch, Ranke wrote: "Prussia is not my fatherland. I have no obligation to it."²⁵⁰ Clearly, in his early career, Ranke's German identity still remained on the level of attachment to his local state. To maintain his social identity as a secondary education teacher and a learned elite while avoiding possible Prussian suppression of academic freedom, Ranke once contemplated relocating to "one of the Protestant cities in Bavaria,"²⁵¹ or to the city of Munich, where he could continue to use the library facilities, pursue his academic career, and retain his social identity and his Protestant belief.

Ranke's reaction to Prussia's proposed restrictions on academic freedom exemplified his identification as a scholar and his insistence on political neutrality. While concentrating on a history of the Reformation, Ranke declined an invitation from King Frederick Wilhelm IV of Prussia to serve as an adviser on issues of constitutional reform. In response to German liberal intellectuals' demand for expanding the political franchise, King Wilhelm IV, who preferred professional rule *for* the people to mob rule *by* the people, planned to draft a far less liberal constitution — an estate-type constitution — where members of the Prussian Parliament would be elected on a suffrage system based upon tax-paying ability. Considering himself an academician, Ranke believed

²⁴⁹ See, Charles E. McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany, 1700-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), especially the chapter six.

²⁵⁰ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 29.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

himself unable to advise on Prussian issues because he did not “know the internal condition of the Prussian provinces well enough,” and additionally admitted that his devotion to historical investigation made him a man “living completely in the sixteenth century,” and not in the present.²⁵²

Ranke thus claimed a separation between objective historical research and partisan political reality. He desired the complete freedom of investigating historical truth while maintaining a distance between the scholarly communication of scientific values and the intellectual expression of political opinions.²⁵³ Ranke’s rationale validated his reluctance to subordinate himself to a Prussocentric national identity and underscored his dilemma over considering himself a Saxon citizen residing in Prussia while concurrently identifying himself with the Christian nation and upholding the merit of academic liberty. He contended that the current Prussian monarchy, as a foreign state, played no role in his interpretation of the German Reformation. As such, his objective historical investigation of sixteenth-century Germany should not be taken as support for the official Prussian vision of the German future.

Nevertheless, Ranke’s active involvement in the political transformations of Germany seemed inevitable. When the community of scholars recognized Ranke’s historical work on the history of the Reformation, the Prussian monarchy immediately offered him a professorship in history at the University of Berlin in 1825. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Prussian administration admitted that the hiring of Ranke was essentially a political consideration. In 1832, he was hired as the editor of the

²⁵² Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 47.

²⁵³ Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, rev. ed. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 57.

conservative political periodical *Historisch-Politische Zeitschrift*. This journal was founded for the purposes of providing “an organ for the defense of the policies of an enlightened Prussian bureaucracy against its numerous liberal critics on the left,” and to distinguish “the positions of the Prussian government from that of the reactionary right.”²⁵⁴ Ranke eventually acknowledged that, on behalf of articulating and promoting a “yet-to-be” unified German nation, the preservation of scholarly objectivity oftentimes comprised unavoidable political engagement and possible state sanction for historical research.

Ranke, as both a history professor and the editor of a pro-Prussian media outlet, experienced the identity shift of becoming national. This shift gradually developed toward identifying Germany as a “yet-to-be” unified nation both in an ethno-cultural and a political sense. In 1832, he acknowledged that previous German nationalists, who had solely identified the German nation as a *Kulturnation*, had “lured [the Germans] on the false road”²⁵⁵ and failed to systematically and institutionally construct a German national identity. In response to the constant challenges of liberal movements of the 1830s, he argued that the correct path for constructing the German nation was to “create a genuine German state” which was in accordance “to the spirit of the nation.”²⁵⁶

In 1841, when he was appointed as the official historiographer of Prussia, Ranke experienced increasing pressure from the Prussian administration to subordinate his identification with his local state to that of a Prussocentric Germany. In a letter to Gustav

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 70.

²⁵⁵ Ranke, *Über die Trennung und die Einheit von Deutschland* [About the division and the unity of Germany] (1832), quote from James Sheehan, “What Is German History? Reflections on the Role of the Nation in German History and Historiography,” *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981), 1.

²⁵⁶ Iggers, *The German Conception of History*, 73.

Adolf, Ranke expressed his willingness to devote himself to the fulfillment of the Prussian cause:

I am indeed [standing] on the ground of fatherland, and virtually [consider] myself [as] an alien (*Fremdling*); but I could gradually become a Prussian national (*Einheimischer*), and perhaps I could contribute a little bit.²⁵⁷

Ranke, as both a native of the Kingdom of Saxony and employee of the Kingdom of Prussia, nonetheless continued to consider himself a resident alien sojourning under the jurisdiction of the Prussian monarchy. Prussia's commitment to protect Ranke's legal rights during this period reflected efforts by the German states to institute legal reforms defining legal residents and administrative actions in accordance with the prevalent nationalist movements within the territories of the German Confederation.

During the post-Napoleonic era, in order to defend their borders against foreign intrusion, individual German states simply exercised the notions of a "German-French" dichotomy and a chauvinist cultural nationalism to legally distinguish residents from strangers. Yet, because of increasing intrastate migration, the state's concerns over the economic utility of different groups of foreigners to the state, and the government's interest in military and administrative recruitment in the 1820s and 1830s, the German states replaced the prevailing terminology of "resident" with the distinction between "citizens" and "aliens." This reform was extensively implemented after 1834, when Prussia successfully created the German Custom Union (*Zollverein*), which included most of the German states with the exclusion of Austria. Although this mechanism of defining citizenship operated at the state level, the borders separating aliens from citizens

²⁵⁷ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 310: "Ich bin zwar jetzt auf diesem vaterländischen Boden fast selbst noch ein Fremdling, könnte aber doch mit dem Zeit einheimischer werden und vielleicht auch einiges liefern."

and those of the German Confederation were identical. In Ranke's case, the term "alien" referred to a citizen of another state, not to non-German residents. He had been legally a citizen of the State of Saxony and a citizen of the German Confederation, but remained a resident alien in the Kingdom of Prussia.²⁵⁸

To further encourage Prussian subjects' (*Untertan*) cultivation of state patriotism and their support of Prussian dominance of German politics over the Austrian Empire, the Prussian monarchy implemented a "Law on the acquisition and loss of the quality of the Prussian subject" in 1842. The law guaranteed equal rights to all "subjects" of the Prussian crown regardless of whether their memberships were found on "descent, legitimation, marriage, or bestowal (naturalization)."²⁵⁹ This reform bill on Prussian citizenship, which no longer distinguished members by their groups, classes and nationalities, established "a territorially uniform and direct relationship between the state and its members."²⁶⁰ Accordingly, it transformed the Prussian state from a "territorial organization" to a "membership association," where state endowed patriotism could be systematically deployed through the Prussian bureaucracy.²⁶¹ As a Prussian government official, Ranke realized that, in addition to emphasizing the commonly shared cultural and historical elements of the German region, the Prussian administration anticipated his

²⁵⁸ For the changing policies of German citizenship, see Roger Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), Andreas K. Fahrmeir, "Nineteenth-Century German Citizenships: A Reconsideration," *The Historical Journal* 40 (1997), 721-752, and Eli Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship in Germany: Ethnicity, Utility and Nationalism* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

²⁵⁹ Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 70-71.

²⁶⁰ Dieter Gosewinkel, "Citizenship and Naturalization Politics in Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Challenging Ethnic Citizenship: German and Israeli Perspectives on Immigration*, eds. Daniel Levy and Yfaat Weiss (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 61.

²⁶¹ Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 71.

patriotism towards the Prussian state in the institutional efforts to propagate a Prussocentric German nation-state.

However, the revolutionary waves of liberalism in the 1830s and the 1840s constantly challenged German states' efforts to sustain monarchical supremacy. In 1848, German educated elites convened at the Frankfurt Parliament, intending to draft an Imperial Constitution that would unify all German states into one sovereign nation, excluding the Austrian monarchy. They also invited Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia to be the hereditary ruler of the new *Kleindeutschland* (smaller Germany). However, when Friedrich Wilhelm IV declined the offer, the Prussian Parliament concurrently proposed another less liberal project of *Kleindeutschland* to respond to the liberalists' demands as well as to the other competing proposal of *Großdeutschland* (greater Germany) that aimed to unify the German states under the leadership of the Austrian monarchy.

Although the members of the Frankfurt Parliament did not achieve their goals, their proposal of a German nation-state did mark a momentous shift in the development of German nationalism. In spite of their failure to reach a consensus on the territories that would be included in the proposed German unification, the members of the national assembly overwhelmingly agreed that a more pragmatic definition of German citizenship should be implemented across the German borders. On December 27, 1848, they passed the "Imperial law regarding the basic rights of the German people" (*Reichsgesetz betreffend die Grundrechte des deutschen Volkes*) to legally grant all political and cultural rights not only to ethnic Germans, but also to German Jews and non-German-speaking minorities living in the territories of the projected German nation. This legal bill, as Brian Vick has recently contended, proposed an intimate integration of the

linguistic or ethnic definition of Germany as a *Kulturnation* with the idea of identifying Germany as a political nation.²⁶²

Significantly, most delegates of the revolutionary assemblies both in Frankfurt and in Berlin agreed on the preservation of monarchical authority. They argued that the monarchy should represent itself as an institutional center for the “yet-to-be” unified German nation, and as a symbolic agent of the expression of national culture.²⁶³ This consensus pragmatically suggested a discursive shift away from German cultural nationalism toward political nationalism, and reaffirmed the indispensable role of the political state in the nationalist project of nation-building. To secure Prussia’s political and cultural dominance in the projected German borders, the military nobilities (*Junker*) and bureaucrats of the Restorative monarch of Prussia and the ultraconservative members of various patriotic clubs collaborated to institutionalize the doctrine of *Mit Gott für König und Vaterland* (With God for King and Fatherland) in the Prussocentric project of German unification.

Ranke also endorsed this doctrine as both a university professor and the official historiographer of Prussia. After having experienced the lack of a tradition of German political unity, the unclear definitions of Germany as an ethno-cultural nation, and the agonizing disagreement over the solutions of *Kleindeutschland* and *Großdeutschland*, Ranke anticipated that the discursive conformity of identifying Germany as a political nation could provide an international and universal recognition of Germany’s

²⁶² Brian Vick, *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 79-138.

²⁶³ Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Abigail Green, “Political Institutions and Nationhood in Germany, 1750-1914,” in *Power and the Nation in European History*, eds. Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 322-323.

individuality and independence. The bureaucratic function of being the Prussian historiographer obliged him to search for historical evidences to justify Prussian leadership over the process of German unification and to legitimize the monarch as both the exclusive builder and the centralized agent of German national politics and culture.

As Ranke's scholarship continued to gain renown, the Bavarian King Maximilian II invited Ranke to relocate and serve under him in Munich in 1853. Ranke immediately declined the offer, assertively stating that guarding the interest of the Prussian monarchy was his focal, and official, historiographical responsibility.²⁶⁴ The emphasis upon his individual and social associations with the Prussian monarchy and his hesitation about serving under a Catholic monarch additionally implied that he intended to modify his construction of a national identity from the idea of Germany as a cultural nation to that of Germany as a unified political nation led by the Protestant state of Prussia. He argued:

It is no different with state and nation. A decisive positive dominance of one over the other would lead to others' ruin. A merging of them all would destroy the essence of each. Out of separate and independent development will emerge the true harmony.²⁶⁵

Once the European revolutionary waves had been successfully restrained, the juxtapositional notions of state and nation confirmed Ranke's assumption that a culturally unified nation demanded a centralized political administration to guarantee its independence.

Taking European political development into consideration, the question of future German unification, as Johann Gustav Droysen described in 1848, was a "question of

²⁶⁴ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 368-369.

²⁶⁵ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 155.

power.”²⁶⁶ To materialize the Prussocentric *Kleindeutschland*, which excluded the German speaking Catholic Austrians, the Prussian monarchy needed to eradicate regional and local differences within the projected German border and to establish a harmonious political relationship with other European nation-states. Ranke thereby argued:

[The] exclusive leadership of Prussia gives her a power to build [a nation] without the participation of Austria ... Germany also has her limited demand. ... A new empire takes her place in unity with limitation measured by individual circumstances. The collective national feeling would be able to see the future waiting quietly.²⁶⁷

Ranke’s support of the *Kleindeutsch* solution corresponded not only to his view of the ideal government’s role in the construction of collective national identity, but also to his political allegiance to the Restorative monarch of Prussia. He suggested that the revolutionary idea of a “universal republic” represented by the French nation-state “essentially abuses the people’s attitude towards fighting for the fatherland,” because the French enlightened notion of the popular sovereignty would suppress individual “autonomy and independence,” obliterate each nation’s “particularity,” and create a world of “dissidence.”²⁶⁸ Therefore, the “great mission” assigned to the Prussian monarchy in the nineteenth century was to unify the German nation and to challenge the French ideas of “general empire” and “general republic.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Johann Gustav Droysen, “Speech to the Frankfurt Assembly, 1848,” accessed March 22, 2009, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/germanunification.html>.

²⁶⁷ Ranke, *Sämtlich Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche, Neue Sammlung*, 577: “Unter der ausschließenden Führung Preußens hat sich eine Macht gebildet, welche auch ohne Theilnahme Oesterreichs ... Deutschland hat auch in dieser Beschränkung seine Anspruch ... das neue Reich ist mit ihm in einen Bund getreten, wie es den Verhältnissen einzig angemessen. Das gesammelte Nationalgefühl kann der Zukunft ruhig entgegen sehen.”

²⁶⁸ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, eds. H. Bernhard Hoefl and Hans Herzfeld (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 544.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Arguably, Ranke assumed that the new Prussocentric *Kleindeutschland* would politically differentiate itself from other nations, protect German national culture, and help it thrive. The Prussian state had sought to establish a national *Gemeinwesen* (community) by institutionalizing a communal feeling of *Gestammstellung* (status of totality), purposely designed to restrain citizens' freedom of building a nation-state based upon the idea of popular sovereignty. This concept of national identity aimed to bring the prince's personality and the citizens' demands for individuality together as a harmonious whole.²⁷⁰ The articulation of German nationhood therefore corresponded to Ranke's attempt to reconcile all contradictions to best suit his construction of a tripartite selfhood, and his political aspirations as well.

The Prussian leadership's creation of a unified *Staatsnation* of Germany was not merely the result of Germans' response to European power politics. It was also the reflection of a struggle between different cultural unities, whose legitimacy and significance could only be conveyed in the stories of states and their battles.²⁷¹ For example, as a proponent of a "closer union of German states" under Prussian "hegemony,"²⁷² Paul Pfizer in his *Correspondence between Two Germans* suggested that the Germans needed "common interests for [the] future, [a] common institution for [the] present, common memories of the past," and ultimately, "a place in the world history" which would eradicate the previous emphasis on regional "particularism."²⁷³ The

²⁷⁰ Ranke, *Die deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund: Deutsche Geschichte von 1780 bis 1790* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1871), vol. 1, 272.

²⁷¹ See Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990), 81-127.

²⁷² Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany: 1840-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 42.

²⁷³ Quote from Harold James, *A German Identity, 1770-1990* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 50.

German intellectuals' call for manufacturing a common sense of belonging could also be observed in Ranke's farewell speech of 1824 in which, as mentioned previously, he redefined both the social relationship between historians and politicians, and the temporal relationship between the future, present and past.

Throughout his career, Ranke was able to engender a sense of belonging that involved a personal subjection and communal subordination to a collective national cause through strategic employment of therapeutic forgetting. He argued that the fundamental "spirit that [made] a nation," demanded "a joyful obedience" from the people by following the command with "an immense element of [institutional] power."²⁷⁴ Taking himself as the personal embodiment of the "united states of Germany" (*bundervereinigtes Duetschland*), he not only recognized the respective local pasts and local administrations, such as those of Bavaria, Württemberg and Hannover, but also strived to incorporate these regional particularities into the promotion of the identity of Prussocentric Germany without "foreign interferences."²⁷⁵ As a result, the new national identity was constructed first by the individual's voluntary subordination within the Prussian border, then by the popular and regional interactions with the Prussian administration, and finally by the completion of an inclusive German spirit that excluded any foreign influences in various German states.

The construction of a Prussocentric *Kleindeutschland* also demanded a systematic plan to eliminate the political disagreement dictated by religious differences among German states, especially the Catholic states of southern Germany, which had been sympathizing with the Catholic monarchy of Austria. Ranke thereby proposed to

²⁷⁴ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 363.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

institute a collective German patriotism that propagated the Prussian vision of German unification as the only effective means of fulfilling universal humanity. In 1864, he advocated that “if the German nation could live coherently” by subordinating itself to “the realization of the universal idea,” the Germans would surrender their differences, congregate together, and at the same time concede to “an impartial sphere of the universal humanity (*eine Offenheit für die allgemeine Menschheit*).”²⁷⁶ This statement enabled Ranke to convince the Catholic Bavarian king Maximilian II to support Prussia’s exclusion of Austrian power in the German unification. As a result, for some southern Catholic German states, the political unification of 1871 was “not the outcome of the German past, but the story of how Germans triumphed over their own past.”²⁷⁷

As soon as the Prussian monarchy was capable of bringing the German states together with a recognized political and cultural legitimacy, Ranke amended his discourse of German identity. He contended that process of building a unified German *Staatsnation* demonstrated “how the world becomes an eternal one.”²⁷⁸ Hence, the construction of a German nation transcended all sorts of sociopolitical boundaries and successfully transformed the notion of German identity into a national one with totality, which could solely be manifested in the universal history. He wrote,

Now, I move ahead and generally adopt a spiritual life of the humanity which manifests itself from the national origins. Through [national] unification, [this life] becomes a whole, upon which a collective culture thus depends. We live in the middle of this expansive tendency of great

²⁷⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 391.

²⁷⁷ Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor*, 66.

²⁷⁸ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 159.

movement, which seizes not only different parts of the world, but also the innerness of all [social] classes.²⁷⁹

Ranke essentially envisioned his construction of German identity as a continuous project in which the past served to guide the German present and future.

Historical discourse about a real or imagined German past thus became purposive in a scholarly and professional manner. Ranke re-told the story of making a primordial, cohesive and unique German nation-state. He thereby concluded that the Prussian-led German unification was a national response to the sociopolitical transformations of Europe, where the totality of the German *Volksgeist* could be illustrated and affirmed through the historian's discursive imagination of Germany as a historical *Kulturnation* and as an emerging *Staatsnation* in the perennial development of universal history.

²⁷⁹ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 639: "Ich gehe nun weiter und nehme ein geistiges Leben in der Menschheit überhaupt an, welches sich in nationalen Anfängen manifestirt, durch deren Vereinigung aber zu einem Ganzen wird, so daß die gesammte Kultur darrauf beruht. Wir leben mitten in der expansive Tendenz dieser großen Bewegung, welche nicht allein die verschiedenen Theile der Welt ergreift, sondern auch in dem Inneren alle Klassen."

CHAPTER 4 - From National History to Universal History: Ranke's Nationalist Historiography

As a professional historian, Ranke felt obligated to generate a state-centered and accredited scholarly narrative about the German past that would rationally and seamlessly facilitate the personal and public processes of becoming national. He assumed that the normative discourse of national history would thus function to support the construction of a tripartite selfhood and a German national identity centered around the Prussian state. Correspondingly, by investigating the development of statehood, he also anticipated the legitimization of the Prussian-led *Kleindeutschland*, which would be governed on the basis of a political synthesis of autocracy and a limited parliamentarism.²⁸⁰

Yet, sociopolitical realities in the German region posed a twofold challenge for the historical enterprise of imagining a nationalist past. First, historians needed to reconcile two sets of interacting forces that had dominated the German past: “the history of a prolonged tension between unity and diversity, [and] the search for cohesion and the fact of fragmentation.”²⁸¹ Secondly, they needed to establish a dynamic conformity between individual selfhood and collective national identity. Ranke attempted to overcome these challenges by envisioning a unified Germany in his nationalist historiography. In Ranke’s own framing of the issue, the story of making the German nation had been led and accomplished by the Prussian monarchy since the sixteenth century. In this narrative, Germany evolved uninterruptedly from a diverse nation with a common ethno-

²⁸⁰ Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), 118-119.

²⁸¹ James Sheehan, “What Is German History? Reflections on the Role of the *Nation* in German History and Historiography,” *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981), 22.

cultural bound to a “yet-to-be” unified political nation with modern Prussia at the helm. Through the strategic employment of historiographical forgetting that involved manipulation of historical memories, Ranke sought to overlook certain parts of the German past in the formulation of a historical discourse that called for commemoration and communal bonds to justify the construction of a modern German nation-state.

Ranke’s approach to the study of German national history fundamentally contributed to the professionalization of the discipline. It effectively unveiled the meaning of history to the individual, communal and universal aspects of life. Along with the exercise of source criticism, his pursuit of historical objectivity exemplified his unyielding obsession to write “history as a way of . . . imposing a meaning on history.”²⁸² He argued that the idea of state and its maintenance were “virtually represented in the connection of the past with the present and the future.”²⁸³ The historical narrative reflected his agenda of nationalizing the German past. The narrative, although imagined as “objective,” in reality functioned as an apparatus for the Prussian administration to legitimize its propagation of a collectivist German patriotism.

Ranke’s nationalist historiography provided Germans with the institutional authorization to generate an exclusive national identity. He anticipated that, through meticulous inquiries into the formation of the German nation and the development of European nationalism, he would discover that the German nation had evolved in accordance with the general tendency of nationalizing European states and the providential scheme of universal development. By conceptualizing a historical

²⁸² Erlend Ronge, “The Aim of Interpretation is to Create Perplexity in the Face of the Real: Hayden White in Conversation with Erlend Ronge,” *History and Theory* 48 (2009), 71.

²⁸³ Leopold von Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, eds. H. Bernhard Hoelt and Hans Herzfeld (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 459.

correlation (*Zusammenhang*) between the past and present of Germany and Europe, he sought to authenticate the national unification of Germany as an inevitable process in the development of universal history. As a result, Ranke utilized this discursive strategy to present the universal history of the modern era on a world-historical platform, on which the emerging European nations contended with one another for national independence and world domination.

I: The subjective imagination and objective construction of the German past

To support the Prussian-led unification of Germany, Ranke ventured to construct a Prussocentric version of the German past. He viewed the history of making a unified German nation to be a correct national progression.²⁸⁴ Unlike the French republican concept of nationhood, the construction of a “genuine” German state did not require a radical departure from the past, but rather a revised discourse of the German past which aimed to construct “a shared destiny and a common history [that] knits individuals together.”²⁸⁵ In Ranke’s view, this revision should not simply focus on the fragmented political development within the German region, because as “Germany has no center,” historians “must take everything into account.”²⁸⁶ Before Germans were able to consider the fatherland as a political unity, they needed to “at least restore the reputation of

²⁸⁴ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, [Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg and History of Prussia, during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries], trans. Sir Alex and Lady Duff Gordon (London: John Murray, 1849), vol. 2, 462. Ranke wrote, “Progress is the only true development.”

²⁸⁵ Theodore Laue, *Leopold von Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 74; Ranke, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nation, from 1494 to 1515*, trans. Philips Ashworth (London: Henry G. Dohn, 1853), 3.

²⁸⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, eds. Volker Dotterweich and Walther Peter Fuchs (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1975), 139.

[Germany as] a nation of thinking (*ein denkenden Nation*).”²⁸⁷ To justify a seamless transition of German identity from one of *Kulturnation* to a politically unified, centralized Prussocentric administration, Ranke prescribed the normalization of German history that would fundamentally renovate the German national spirit, initiate a popular awareness of German-ness, and fabricate a collective desire for German political autonomy and national independence.

Having been inspired by the concept of historical continuity described by German romanticists such as Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling and Johann Gottfried Herder, Ranke imagined national history as a symbol of commonly shared property belonging to the entire nation. He argued,

Each nationality (*Nationalität*) depends upon its individual ancient instinct. The nationality does not exist in the current life alone; it includes all generations. Our history is one of the great possessions of our nation — a worthy object of all lives and inner profundity (*Tiefsinn*).²⁸⁸

Clearly, Ranke perceived nationality as an inherent trait that all citizens possess; one that had been dormant due to a long tradition of political fragmentation in the German region. Ranke thereby suggested that the construction of a modern national identity demanded individuals’ conscious recognition of nationality and an ability to identify with a homogeneous, national community.

Accordingly, in such a politically fragmented German region, a collective national identity needed to be invented. Through the employment of historiographical forgetting, historians could deliberately manipulate the national past as well as commonly shared

²⁸⁷ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Alfred Dove (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890), 421.

²⁸⁸ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 326: “Eine jede Nationalität beruht auf ihrem eigenen alten Instinkt. Nicht in den Jetztlebenden allein besteht die Nationalität, sie umfaßt alle Geschlechter. Unsere Geschichte ist eines der größten Besitztümer unserer Nation, ein würdiges Objekt voll Leben und innerem Tiefsinn.”

memories. To do so, they posited a homogeneous German identity by assuming the existence of a dormant sense of national belonging, hoping that their version of the German past would awaken a collective national consciousness.

To achieve this objective in the culturally uniform but politically divided region of Germany, historians needed to fold regional particularism into the idea of a *total* nation. With the recognition of the “grandest particularities” in the diverse German lands, Ranke identified the nation as the “German Commonwealth” (*deutschen Gemeinwesens*), which no longer “limit[s] itself to any boundaries.”²⁸⁹ Although each political entity had its own individualities and particularities, these unique local and regional characteristics principally contributed to the “general development of the idea of the [German] fatherland.”²⁹⁰ Historians thereby could adapt a narrative of totality to associate the *Landesgeschichte* (local history or history of the land) with the national history. Without the notion of Germany as a totalized *Kulturnation*, as Ranke argued, local history “would be an absurdity.”²⁹¹ The national history of Germany, therefore, “must include histories of German regions (*Landschaft*),” so that it could be metaphorically envisioned as a “powerful multiple-branches plant of nature,” and as a genuine ethno-cultural nation.²⁹² Namely, the local and regional histories supplied the German national history with the historical elements, which were deeply rooted in a singular and unified concept.

Nonetheless, to revitalize the “dormant” or non-existent German identity, German historians strove to bestow historical significance on a unified German nation that could

²⁸⁹ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 547.

²⁹⁰ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche*, *Neue Sammlung*, eds. Alfred Dove and Theodor Wiedemann (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1888), 494.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 514.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

amalgamate a diverse collection of regional pasts into the national history. The history of creating the German nation was a “perpetual reaction of [regional] particularities and that of generalities (*Allgemeinen*),” which demanded that historians “assemble” piles of the “incomprehensible memoranda” (*Notizen*) of local pasts and to interpret and present them as a coherent, nation-shaping unity.²⁹³ Ranke subsequently suggested that this was precisely the work incumbent on German scholars:

When the offence comes from the particularity, which locates itself in conflict with an insufficiently constituted generality, the interest of [national] unity holds there. Our academic alliance ought to devote its industriousness to the investigation of all the great, dominant, promising, and uniting events of the life of the nation.²⁹⁴

Yet, to overcome local historians’ failure to promote the national interest, Ranke proposed a total and collective approach toward studying the local past. In a speech addressed to the local historians of Germany, he wrote:

In our Germany, there have been endless imperial, and various regional (*landschaftlich*) and local interests demonstrated in the historical studies. Our organization should thereby differentiate from them, [and work on a new local history] that applies [an image of] a total fatherland to all the areas in the sense they were originally put together.²⁹⁵

Local historians should thus focus their works on integrating local interests with the interests of the fatherland. To do so, they needed to explain how local and regional histories converged in the course of the national past. More specifically, without a

²⁹³ Ibid., 487.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 487: “Selbst wenn der Anstoß von dem Besonderen ausgeht, das sich in Conflict mit einem unzureichend constituirten Allgemeinen befindet, walten doch die Interessen der Gesammtheit vor. — Der Erforschung der großen, Alle angehenden, Alle verbindenden, das Leben der Nation beherrschenden Ereignisse soll unsere akademisch Verbindung ihren Fleiß widmen.”

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 526: “In unserem Duetschland gibt es ein unendlich reiches und mannigfaltiges landschaftliches und locales Interesse für die historischen Studien; unsere Gesellschaft sollte sich dadurch unterscheiden, daß sie sich dem gesammten Vaterlande in allen seinen Gauen widmete; in diesem Sinne wurde sie ursprünglich zusammengesetzt.”

nationalist enterprise for recollecting the regional past, national historians were unable to narrate a cohesive discourse in which the local past also became active and comprehensible.

In 1841, as official Prussian historiographer, Ranke advocated the institutional implementation of a nationalized German past for the Prussian project of nation-building. He advised that German historians needed first to re-evaluate local history based on the rigorous methodology of historical research and writing, second, to criticize the compositions of provincial histories, and, last, to compile a collective history of states.²⁹⁶ With the strategic employment of historiographical forgetting, the objective criticism of sources essentially complimented historians' subjective interpretations of the regional past, in which local pasts could be subordinated to the general, national past, thus providing essential services for the compilation of a national history.

Regional differences no longer complicated the principal core of the national past. As Ranke noted, when "the need of the nation rested on the demand of studying the German past," the local pasts would be conclusively subdued under the homogeneity of a national consciousness.²⁹⁷ The communal aspiration of unification enabled Germans to simultaneously seek the institutional formation of a national consciousness and to reinforce a definite separation between themselves and others, especially Germans' "striving neighbors in the west," such as the French.²⁹⁸ In Ranke's view, this ideal-typical historiography of Germany "must comprise the entire German nation" and "entail

²⁹⁶ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walter Peter Fuchs (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 310.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 581.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

its national feeling.”²⁹⁹ The readers of both local and national histories of Germany could thereby embrace a collective sense of belonging, identify their national origins, develop a national character in the present, and regenerate future national development as a unified nation-state.

If Germans could not exclusively identify the fatherland as a political state in their national past, they needed to investigate the development of German statehood concealed in the supranational framework of a larger European past. Ranke argued that, although “the national spirit is a thought of invented divinity (*ein Gedanke der schaffenden Gottheit*), [the nation] works on its own path, [and] the [working] of the world depends upon the conformation and interaction [among nations].”³⁰⁰ See in this way, the national spirit was an institutional invention justified by the establishment of nationalist historiography. Conversely, the general development of modern nations in Europe needed to be examined through understanding the pasts of individual nations in a state-centric manner. This study would not only recognize the existence of each nation based on “the acknowledgement of being a distinct political state”,³⁰¹ it would also enable Germans to conveniently distinguish themselves from other European powers, to locate their position in the development of European civilizations, and to anticipate the arrival of a unified German nation-state.

Ranke’s ambition for studying the pasts of foreign nations was to discover or restore the historical significances of his “yet-to-be” unified fatherland from the history

²⁹⁹ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 480; Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 303.

³⁰⁰ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 275.

³⁰¹ Ranke, *The History of Serbia and the Servian Revolution*, trans. Mrs. Alexander Kerr (London: Henry G. Dohn, 1853), 164.

of Europe.³⁰² In his investigation of the histories of Romano-Germanic nations, such as France and England, Ranke noticed that both contained recognizably German characteristics. Both French and English nations of the early-modern period shared a common “Germanic” style of monarchy, which advocated “the aristocratic, personal, and tolerant side of the monarchical state.”³⁰³ Ranke argued that “Germany is the motherland of the Germanic world,” where a common language and culture were shared.³⁰⁴ The characteristic mind (*Geist*) of German-ness was indeed an integral part of the histories of all the western nations of Europe, and the world.

Within the framework of European and universal histories, a univocal national past would permit paternal administrators to indoctrinate their residents through the deliberate use of historiographical or therapeutic forgetting to elide certain aspects of the national past. Conversely, the maternal implication of the German past, which emphasized Germany’s contributions to the development of a universal humanity, would strengthen Germans’ collective sense of national pride and belonging. As a result, Ranke’s nationalist historiography of Germany stressed the narrative of a unifying *Kleindeutschland* in a discursive mode of nationalizing the German past that belonged to the yet-to-come *Staatsnation*.

II: The exclusive history of *Kleindeutschland*

As Germans had never experienced sociopolitical unification, constructing a unified Germany demanded the invention of a national history. Such an account would

³⁰² Ranke, *A History of England Principally in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. unknown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), vol. 1, v.

³⁰³ Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 267.

³⁰⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 384.

underscore the German providential mission and its contribution to the development of a universal history.³⁰⁵ To coerce Germans into “recognize[ing] the totality of [the German past] in a series of facts, from which the German history is constituted and is currently happening,”³⁰⁶ Ranke advised German historians to synthesize the aesthetic presentation of intuition with the objective criticism of sources in their studies of national history.

Ranke’s nationalist historiography was based upon the organicist interpretation of an originary German national identity. Ranke argued that history was a great chain of events and these events as a whole continuously dominated the development of the German region. As he argued,

... history should be a work of continuum (*Kontinuum*) and ... every subsequent event depends upon and is rooted in the same total (*ganze*) past. Man has further noticed that he develops a false perception [by believing that] there are indeed discontinuous divisions (*Abschnitte*) in the nature of matter, which are not at all in action and hard to be comprehended [individually].³⁰⁷

Ranke assumed the national past would manifest itself in totality if historians successfully rectified previous fictitious perceptions to reveal the *authentic* past. The formation of a national identity, as Brian Vick contends, is “a process in which the nation had to be continually reborn in the consciousness of those belonging to it.”³⁰⁸ Thus, compiling German history in its totality meant cultivating a collective sense of national

³⁰⁵ Klaus von Beyme, “Shifting National Identities: the Case of German History,” *National Identities* 1 (1999), 42.

³⁰⁶ Quote from Gunter Berg, *Leopold von Ranke als akademischer Lehrer: Studien zu seinen Vorlesungen und seinen Geschichtsdenken* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 212.

³⁰⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 104: “... die Geschichte ein Kontinuum sei und ... jede spätere Begebenheit in derselben auf der ganze Vergangenheit beruhe und in derselben wurzele; man hat ferner bemerkt, daß man durch solche Abteilungen falsche Vorstellungen erwecke, als gäbe es wirklich Abschnitte in der Natur der Sache, die doch in der Tat gar nicht da sind und sich nur schwer feststellen lassen.”

³⁰⁸ Brian Vick, *Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 206.

consciousness and feeling, and articulating the historical formation of a German national identity.

Historically, the “shrinking territories” narrative of German states was sufficient to provoke a collective patriotism. When the contested nature of the political borders of the Confederation of the Rhine and the Prussia-proposed *Kleindeutschland* were no longer enough of a nationalist rallying cry, the concept of the nation’s “political boundary” consequently became less significant. As a result, Germans needed to envision a “yet-to-be” unified nation defined in ethno-cultural terms, and not by political boundaries;³⁰⁹ the historical definition of the German nation needed the concept of *Kulturnation*.

The history of Germany as a *Kulturnation* would be interpreted from the perspective of *Volksgeschichte* (ethno-cultural history). Its purpose, as Klaus Beyme and Klaus Zernack have suggested, was to compensate for “the dreadful fragmented reality”³¹⁰ and the “traditional weakness of the political nation in Germany.”³¹¹ Accordingly, historians could depict the German nation as a “not-yet” but “will-be” unified nation-state. Ranke argued, “Only nations that are involved in continuous spiritual progress are historical. . . . More importantly, to be historical, a nation must participate in the general spiritual development of humanity.”³¹² This teleological notion of national history aimed not only to imagine Germany as a historical nation, upon which the future formation of the German *Staatsnation* was based, but also to argue for Germany’s contribution to the advancement of universal humanity.

³⁰⁹ Beyme, “Shifting National Identities,” 44.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 42.

³¹¹ Klaus Zernack, “Germans and Poles: Two Cases of Nation-Building,” in *Nation-Building in Central Europe*, ed. Hagen Schulez (Leamington Spa, UK: Berg, 1987), 162.

³¹² Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 142.

Based on the solution of a smaller Germany (*Kleindeutsche Lösung*) of 1848, Ranke viewed the narrative of a unified *Staatsnation* as a story of how Germans shared a homogeneous national identity and acknowledged the leadership of the Prussian monarchy in the project of nation-building. The story would strengthen Germans' awareness of their national character and encourage them to subordinate their individual interests to national ones as defined by the political administration. Ranke argued that the "unceasing struggle for dominion" among nations was the core theme of universal history, where the nation's modifications, resistance and reaction of the universal tendencies (or general forces) were documented.³¹³ He further pointed out that in the past, national "conquest involved the subjection of the conquered"; but, in modern times, it desired "union and amalgamation."³¹⁴ Therefore, conflicts among nations evoked civic demands to forge a national identity by either passively or actively distinguishing "us" from "the others."³¹⁵

The Prussian project of building a modern nation-state would concentrate on the unification, not the forced subordination, of the different principalities of the German region. According to Ranke, German political success and unification would be accomplished and commemorated in stages by founding fathers who undertook historical tasks in various nation-building events that ushered in the formation of a uniform national culture, the protection of national independence, and the construction of a German nation-state. German history thus began with the emergence of a German national feeling and consciousness, which shaped the German nation both as a cultural construct

³¹³ Ranke, *Universal History: the Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*, ed. G. W. Prothero (New York: Harper & Brother, 1885), xii.

³¹⁴ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, vol. 2, 455.

³¹⁵ Ranke, *Universal History*, xii.

and as a political establishment. As Ranke described, “It was precisely the resistance [against the Pope around 817] that first awakened Germany’s consciousness of its own importance as a nation.”³¹⁶ He suggested that the contesting ethnic or religious antagonism compelled the Germans to cultivate a collective national consciousness. Yet, a noticeable distinction among nations was not enough to provoke the collective need for a unified German nation; it also required the promised security of national autonomy. The national interests could be preserved only when the German nation was free from foreign influences.

Ranke interpreted the Reformation as both a religious and a political movement that stimulated European awareness of the need to protect their respective national interests and to maintain their autonomy. He observed that when Martin Luther inspired Germans to pursue their own religious freedom and to construct an exclusive linguistic tradition, he initiated Germans’ collective quest for national liberation from foreign intervention, especially from the Pope’s domination of Christendom. In his *History of the Reformation* (1845-1847), Ranke argued that the Protestant Reformation in the German region “was the first time that the national mind was not influenced by foreign models, and manifesting itself purely in the form impressed ... by the great events of the time and the high destinies to which the Germany was called.”³¹⁷ Luther’s vernacular translation of the Latin Bible also inspired Germans to defend the autonomy of the German language. Therefore, it was critically significant to emphasize Luther’s role in the Reformation and, thus, the formation of Germany as a *Kulturnation*.

³¹⁶ Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, trans. Sarah Austin (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1844), 27.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

The history of the Reformation not only signified Germans' contribution to the development of universal history, it also validated Ranke's scheme of German history, which synchronized the creation of the German nation with the emergence of nationalist movements in Europe. The Reformation was the movement "in which universal and national principles intersected and the universal religious principle began its historical transformation into the spiritual component of the individual nation."³¹⁸ As Ranke argued, "the separation from the nation of a universal Christendom was therefore an indispensable step towards the development of the new system of the state, in reference to both internal and external relations."³¹⁹ The Reformation was therefore the "fundamental event of modern history,"³²⁰ inaugurating "the most important era of German history."³²¹

Ranke's narration of the Reformation was notably a discourse laden with the nationalistic sentiments of German liberation.³²² It focused on how the Reformation defined Germany as an ethno-cultural nation-state, "brought German spirits to consciousness," and "documented most of her inner unity."³²³ Ranke retrospectively extended his scope of research to the Papal history of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He observed that the Reformation originated from Europeans' challenges to the sociopolitical dominance of the universal Catholic Church. In dissenting, they sought

³¹⁸ Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 163.

³¹⁹ Ranke, *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, trans. M. A. Garvey (London: Richard Bentley, 1852; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1973), vol. 1, 146.

³²⁰ Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, trans. and ed. Roger Wines (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 47.

³²¹ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 225.

³²² Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 158-177; Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "From the Sacral Community to the Common Man: Reflections on German Reformation Studies," *Central European History* 20 (1987), 232.

³²³ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 53.

to resist the Papacy's domination of biblical interpretation, its demand of each nation's "boundless devotion," and its efforts to maintain "a supranational loyalty to the people in Rome."³²⁴ These struggles initiated a movement for comprehensive religious reform, and further prompted each nation to promote its unique national interests. In his *History of the Popes*, Ranke stated that

The ecclesiastical element has up to this time [the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries] overborne every distinguishing nationality. Now, [although] modified and transformed, again, it asserts individual existence, [which allows] these nationalities to express themselves in a new light.³²⁵

The modification of the universal religion adopted by nations permitted Europeans to recognize their own national existence. It further urged the church to compromise with and to be "fused into the feeling of nationality," which later transformed into "a possession of the community of the state, or the people."³²⁶ Attempts to integrate religion into national life were initially settled and maintained by the political establishment, or by "force of arms."³²⁷ As a result, the construction of the modern nation depended upon the establishment of a centralized political and military administration. The need for "new social and political institutions" engaging in "moral efforts"³²⁸ to protect collective interests resulted from the "conflict of world historical power," in which "new nations [were] built."³²⁹

³²⁴ Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 58-59.

³²⁵ Ranke, *History of the Popes: Their Church and State*, trans. E. Fowler (1901; repr., New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), vol. 1, 25.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 396.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ Ranke, *History of the Reformation*, 363.

³²⁹ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, eds. Alfred Dove, Theodor Wiedermann and Goerg Winter (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1883-1888), vol. 4, II: 171.

In addition to Martin Luther's Reformation, the German struggle against papal domination stimulated Germans' requisition for a centralized administration. Ranke suggested that the establishment of centralized institutions would further strengthen the national consciousness through deliberate exploitation of the friend-or-foe antagonism among nations. Led by Thomas Müntz, the Peasants' War (*Der Deutsch Bauerkrieg*) broke out in 1523, in response to religious and political prejudice. His dissatisfaction with Müntz's style of leadership prompted Luther to criticize the peasants' quest for a centralized socio-political institution as a demand from "murderous, thieving hordes of peasants." Their revolt nonetheless symbolized Germans' urgency for a radical departure from the Pope's control over German affairs.

Müntz's unsuccessful attempt to create a centralized egalitarian society nonetheless signified a new priority for the German project of nation building in the sixteenth century. As Ranke observed, the project had shifted its focus to the idea of a homogenous ethno-cultural nation. Conversely, because the populist idea of a centralized institution was "more radically subversive than ever proclaimed until the time of the French Revolution,"³³⁰ the formation of a German nation did not need a political system of subversion like Müntz's, or the republicanism that radically undermined the German autocratic monarchies represented by the Kingdom of Prussia prior to 1848. Ranke's criticism of popular sovereignty, then, corresponded with his political conservatism and his propagation of a unique German path to building a modern nation-state that could prosper in the European competition for political dominance, especially in the struggle against its rival, France.

³³⁰ Ranke, *History of the Reformation*, 216.

The effectiveness of a centralized administration depended upon its ability to sustain both ethno-cultural autonomy and territorial independence. The dominance of French culture additionally posed a major obstacle in the early European construction of independent nations.³³¹ The legitimacy of Prussian leadership in the unification of Germany originated from its establishment of a centralized military and administrative system that demonstrated the Prussian capability to sustain German political independence and to protect the German character. In his *History of Prussia* (1847), Ranke wrote:

The real basis of the power of Prussia, however, was formed by the central provinces upon the Elbe and the Oder. ... These provinces were the cradles of the military and administrative system, which gave unity and consistence to the whole nation. This system was the strongest expression of the territorial independence of a German principality. In order to maintain this independence, it was necessary to assume a distinctive and unbending character.³³²

The establishment of Prussian force was imperative to maintaining its independence and to providing the monarchy with “a certain rank among the powers of Europe.”³³³ The goal was materialized by the “predominance of [the] dynastic prince” with a “popular foundation” that demanded Prussia “defend itself for a [collective] cause” and to “promise a secured future.”³³⁴

Additionally, the social militarization of Prussia and its emergence as a military power provided Germans with a communal feeling of patriotism to initiate a sense of political loyalty that was particularly indispensable to unify a region suffering from

³³¹ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 127

³³² Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, vol. 1, 176-177.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 420.

³³⁴ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 679.

separatism.³³⁵ When patriotism was directed toward the Prussian monarchy, it altered the social status of peasants and reinforced the identity of Prussia state, which called for the individual's subordination to the Prussian monarchy.³³⁶ The institutional use of patriotism redefined the relationship between the state and its residents. The monarch was thereby able to construct "a honorable and respectable governorate" embedded with a "spiritually free atmosphere, military reputation, and independence" to "subdue any destructive enemies," to protect "universal welfare" (*allgemeinen Wohl*), and to ultimately assert Prussia's leadership in the development of German and European (universal) histories.³³⁷ This framework of correlating the Prussian past with the German one, along with the universal development of Europe, exemplified Ranke's state-centered approach to documenting the country's history (*Geschichte des Landes*).

In addition to searching for founding events that defined the German nation as both an ethno-cultural and a political construct, Ranke strived to identify individual nation or state builders who personified the German characteristics and a German spirit. He contended that

It is obvious that each nation has a completely definite character and a life of its own, which distinguishes itself from all others, and that everything, which the nation has and does, derives from this character. Hence, it is not difficult to indicate the task and the duty of those who govern the state.³³⁸

These historical figures performed their specific duties and tasks to accomplish national objectives in the specific historical era. Studying them, as Ranke suggested, would help

³³⁵ Peter H. Wilson, "Social Militarization in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *German History* 18 (2000), 1-39; Ranke, *Universal History*, 361.

³³⁶ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, vol. 1, 429.

³³⁷ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 346.

³³⁸ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 112.

historians to identify the “course, which the development of the world as a whole has taken,” and to understand a nation’s mission and position in the working of the providential universe.³³⁹

In Ranke’s search for the “founding fathers” of the German nation, he saw Martin Luther as the first, critical architect in the construction of a unified ethno-cultural nation. Luther inspired Germans to forego theological differences and to participate collectively in the formation of a national culture. Ranke deliberately portrayed Luther as “the great author, who was intelligible and found access to both [religious] parties, and preeminently contributed to the foundation of a homogeneous national culture.”³⁴⁰ Luther’s stance on faith-based biblical interpretation challenged Catholic domination over national affairs, and prompted the Germans to recognize the autonomy of German vernacular culture. The popular awareness of cultivating a national culture contributed to the redefinition of Germany as an ethno-cultural nation, which, according to Ranke, was the first institutional stage of the German project of nation building.

Ranke also identified Frederick William as the first political figure to lay down the sociopolitical framework for transforming the German region from a *Kultur* nation to a *de facto* political nation-state. When the Elector of Brandenburg and the Duke of Prussia built his royal army in 1640, and elevated Prussia from a duchy to a kingdom, “the name of Prussia now had not a merely geographical meaning. It signified a nation and government of a peculiar stamp and character.”³⁴¹ Ranke concluded that Frederick William’s accomplishment not only liberated Prussia from foreign political and military

³³⁹ Ibid., 103.

³⁴⁰ Ranke, *History of the Reformation*, 398.

³⁴¹ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, vol. 2, 1.

interference, but also demonstrated a determination to pursue the “haughty independence” of Prussia, one which simply “rests on its own strength.”³⁴²

Nevertheless, the formation of *Kleindeutschland* could not be completed without the seamless integration of the ethno-cultural nation and a political state led by the Prussian monarchy. Ranke subsequently noted that the mid-eighteenth century was a critical moment for the German fatherland because the region did not possess “powerful states,” “men of action,” literature, art, or a culture of its own with which to “resist against the domination of its neighbor.”³⁴³ As a result, the politically fragmented German region was in great need of a leader who was capable of “igniting” the Germans to “assemble the [German] spirit” together.³⁴⁴ The succession of Frederick II of Prussia and his statesmanship effectively revitalized “an effusive admiration in the German race (*dem deutschen Volke*).”³⁴⁵ With the establishment of a central leadership in Prussia, the diverse German region was equipped with a critical military mechanism for defending its territorial integrity, and with a political institution to further advance the national interest of Prussocentric Germany.

Ranke meticulously constructed a Prussocentric history of Germany, which associated the German past with the present and was framed as a unique story of a unified German nation-state centered around the House of Hohenzollern. This nationalist historiography was exclusively comprehensible and meaningful to the German readership. It represented a stabilizing conflict between a homogenous ethno-cultural

³⁴² Ibid., vol. 1, 395.

³⁴³ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 136.

³⁴⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, eds. Walther Peter Fuchs and Theodor Schieder (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1964), 173.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

unity and a diverse political region, and between the fragmented provincial past and a cohesive national history. Ranke wrote:

The German history to such an extent depends upon the consistent actions of conflict between elements of particularism and unity — sometimes it is this one; sometimes it is the other one to be predominant; but they have always acted in combination — [and] depends upon the endless richness of German history.³⁴⁶

It was the German historian's duty to “recognize what really happened in the series of facts by which German history was comprised,”³⁴⁷ and to exclusively nationalize the German past for the readers of Germany. In a letter to his brother, Ranke expressed his satisfaction with serving the German community, rather than serving a wider range of readership beyond the national border. He wrote:

I have already made an attempt here to advance what it seems to be successful for me in the archive. If God grants me, I will again write a true (*wahr*) and agreeable (*angenehm*) book about the most important era of German history to the world. After that, I will endlessly be pleased.³⁴⁸

Furthermore, in the introduction to his *History of the Reformation*, he candidly wrote, “I intended to write a basic book about the [critical] event of modern history. I thought, not of the readers of the wider world, but in terms of satisfying German scholarship and German religious convictions.”³⁴⁹ As Ranke's student Heinrich von Sybel commented,

³⁴⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 325-326: “Die deutsche Geschichte beruht dergestalt auf einem unaufhörlichen Gegeneinanderwirken der Elemente des Partikularismus und der Einheit; — zuweilen ist das eine, zuweilen das andere überwiegend gewesen; doch haben sie immer zusammengewirkt; — darauf beruht der unendliche Reichtum der deutschen Geschichte.”

³⁴⁷ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 21.

³⁴⁸ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 225: “Schon habe ich auch hier einen Versuch gemacht, in dem Archive vorzudringen, das mir auch gelingen zu wollen scheint. Geb' es Gott, dann will ich der Welt wieder ein wahres und auch angenehmes Buch über die wichtigste Epoch der duetscher Geschichte schreiben. Unendlich freue ich mich darauf.”

³⁴⁹ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 47.

his mentor's investigation on the Reformation was essentially a work "impregnated with the enthusiasm of a German patriot for the greatest act of the German spirit."³⁵⁰

Understanding histories of other nations enabled the German historians and their readers to gain a better comprehension of the German national past because it essentially evolved in parallel with the universal tendency of nation-building across Europe.

Ranke's subsequent project associated the national history of the German region with the general development of European nations. In his *History of England*, Ranke reiterated the importance of Germans learning and sharing similar historical experiences. As he wrote:

This [*History of England*] is, I think, particularly suited to the progress of German historical scholarship, which demonstrated the genius of a nation attempting to comprehend the history of all other people with the same trouble and efforts as its own.³⁵¹

Therefore, German historians needed to "devote" their historical inquiries to "the development of the German spirit."³⁵² Conversely, Ranke was aware that he could not comprehend the histories of foreign nations better than the native historians themselves. In 1826 having just begun his research for *History of the Popes*, he once stated, "I was born for German history and not for Italian [*welsche*], which in the last analysis, I cannot understand as well as the German."³⁵³ Despite the discovery of documentary materials on his archival journey in Italy, he could not help but employ a nationalist and ethnocentric perspective of Germany when studying the histories of other nations.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 189.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 243.

³⁵² Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 480.

³⁵³ Quote from Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 160.

In Ranke's view, the articulation of a collective national life and spirit should be the essential theme of nationalist historiography. As such, national historians should focus exclusively on "the lives of mankind, especially the life of the nation," and "verify the spiritual development of an individual race (*Volk*) in its inner continuity."³⁵⁴ Ranke's attempts to historically comprehend the idea of universal humanity coincided with his formation of a tripartite selfhood, where individuality, national community and the universe intertwined harmoniously together. In the beginning of his career, Ranke explicitly indicated that he was "born for German history and not for something else," and that he found his calling in searching for "the universal history."³⁵⁵ He therefore encouraged German historians to advocate a memorialized and institutionalized national identity by presenting and interpreting the German past within the framework of this universal history. Ranke's construction of German national identity and national history thus converged in the elevated course of universal history, which epitomized the totality of a German *Nationalgeist* in the age of nationalism. Accordingly, his historical works not only expedited his career advancement as a professional historian devoting himself to a nationalist cause, but also legitimized the Prussian project of building a unified German nation-state as the ultimate manifestation of the universal spirit of the nineteenth century.

III: The inclusion of the German past in European (universal) history

In the age of nationalism, historians and historical associations often collaborated with political administrations and national institutions. Works of the national past were frequently used to justify the definition of nation-state as an internally inclusive and yet

³⁵⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 138.

³⁵⁵ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 127.

externally exclusive association of membership. Since the nation-state and the national historian both dealt with “the question of inclusion and exclusion,” as Patrick Bahners argues, “the political problem of [national] boundaries” became equivalent to the national historian’s “narrative problem of closure.”³⁵⁶ In the case of German unification, it became the German historian’s vocation to arrange and publicize an exclusionary and providential mission for the German nation on the path to political unification.

German historians expanded their scope of study beyond the nation’s geographic and temporal boundaries in order to locate the historical legitimacy of German unification. Ranke argued that national historians needed to identify a national mission as part of the universal development of humanity and coordinated the national past with the course of universal history:

The objective science of history, as one may have said, does not formally attempt to investigate the origins of contemporary condition. It devotes itself to every epoch of the past with the grandest purpose of recognizing (*erkennen*) and understanding (*verstehen*) itself ...³⁵⁷

This historiographical practice allowed national historians to comprehend the nation as an “imagined community,” associating the national past with the present, and integrating the studied past with a collective forward-moving development in historical time and space. Accordingly, when Ranke attempted to determine the universal meaning of German history, he specifically concentrated on searching for the political justification for a Prussocentric perspective. This Prussocentric vision corresponded with the past and

³⁵⁶ Patrick Bahners, “National unification and narrative unity: The case of Ranke’s *German History*,” in *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800*, eds. Stefan Berger et al. (London: Routledge, 1999), 57.

³⁵⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 457: “Die objektive Wissenschaft der Histoire trachtet nicht ausdrücklich danach, wie man wohl gesagt, den Ursprung der heutigen Zustände zu erforschen; sie widmet sich jeder Epoche der Vergangenheit mit dem vornehmsten Zweck, sie selbst in sich zu erkennen, zu verstehen ...”

present political conditions of the German region, and aligned with the universal tendencies (read: forces) of the historical development of the Eurocentric universe.

Ranke's history therefore aimed to help Germans to identify themselves with the nation's past and present, and to associate themselves with the larger communities of Europe and the universe. During his formative years, he reviewed the great historical works of his German predecessors, and observed that the notion of "general history (*allgemeine Histoire*) was still an unknown subject."³⁵⁸ As Ranke imagined it, the compilation of a general history of Germany demanded all the available resources to "break away" from, or forget about, the previous historical discourses.³⁵⁹ In this way, he could frame his stories of Germany as mirroring "the genesis of the modern world,"³⁶⁰ and therefore could encourage the members of the national community to understand and unreservedly subordinate themselves to the fulfillment of Germany's providential role in God's working of the universe.

Nevertheless, in his first major work on the Protestant Reformation and the origins of national sentiment, Ranke focused his attention exclusively within the borders of German region. He confessed that this particular work was unable to provide German readers with a "general historical instruction," and that it did not help them to identify their "nation's cultural actions and [political] power," particularly "the position of Prussia," in "the playhouse (*Schaubühne*) of the world."³⁶¹ He therefore proposed that a new perspective of universal history needed to be employed in order to establish an

³⁵⁸ Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 194-195.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ Bahners, "National unification and narrative unity," 58.

³⁶¹ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 72.

empathetic understanding between the German past and the universal history. In doing so, he could justify, historically, Prussia's leadership in the working of German unification. With this new prospect, the readers could learn lessons from the past and detect the general tendencies by which the nation's history fundamentally evolved, in compliance with the historical development of the universe.

The historical lessons also provided readers with moral instructions to invigorate their awareness of nationality. Ranke argued that historical didacticism was "the closest and most immediate relationship between the individual mind and the universal life of mankind, and the point of junction [of these two] arguably determine[d] each individual's character and destiny."³⁶² Similar to the application of history to his own imagined selfhood, Ranke noted that historical study provided guidance for identifying with the Enlightenment construct of a universal humanity. Specifically, learning from history enabled the individual to grasp the providential significance of his worldly existence. The application of historical thinking also allowed the nation-state, as the representative of collective national group, to justify its sociopolitical stance in the development of universal history. In the same way, Ranke envisioned a national history of Germany, which portrayed a future German unification as the manifestation of a world-historical association between German traditions and universal ideas.

History also revealed some universal features of human lives, such as self or communal preservation. Ranke reminded Germans that the Protestant Reformation exemplified the German nation's determination to defend its territorial sovereignty and

³⁶² Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, vol. 1, 251.

cultural equality while confronting foreign threats.³⁶³ By consistently employing historical references, Ranke established a correlation between the German efforts of defending national independence and the universal tendencies revealed in biblical history. When Ranke interpreted King Saul's biblical struggle with Samuel as the "foreshadowed" confrontation between the German states and the Papacy, he concluded that this conflict was "the natural opposition between spiritual impulses and [the] tendencies towards complete independence," which had been "exhibited in a form symbolical for all times."³⁶⁴ Ranke additionally supported the emergence of the Prussian state by comparing its military expansion with the decline of Athens and Sparta and the rise of Persian power in ancient times.³⁶⁵ Henceforth, Ranke saw the militarization of the Prussian state as the result of a growing German consciousness which repelled foreign domination, especially France.

More references of the comparable developments between the German and European pasts could be found in Ranke's historical works. Ranke perceived the history of the Roman Empire as a "central point" that linked the German past with universal history in order to establish a general outlook for his nationalist historiography. However, this perspective only focused on how universal human factors dictated the development of history. To address Germany's particular contribution to the progress of universal humanity, Ranke implemented an ethnocentric approach to identify common "turning points" in the courses of universal and German histories. For example, not until the republication of Tacitus' *Germania* in Italy in 1455 had the term "German" been used

³⁶³ Steven Ozment, *A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 76-86.

³⁶⁴ Ranke, *Universal History*, 58.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 361.

by the Romans referring to the Germanic tribes composed of a loose mixture of peoples without a coherent Germanic identity. With a mixture of criticism and praise, Tacitus contended that the Germans composed a distinct people on the foundation of classical antiquity, and confirmed that their strivings for German nationality had been rooted in a shared European culture. As the history of the *Germania* continuously unfolded, the *Germania* of the Romans was equivalent to contemporary Germany. Ranke could thereby conveniently identify Luther's Reformation as the turning point which gave birth to the modern German nation.

As the legend continued, the beginning of German history could be dated back to the first century. In Ranke's estimation, German history began when Arminius led Germans in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest and liberated German tribes from Roman control in 9 A.D. As he argues:

From whatever point we seek to investigate the development of later centuries, we are almost invariably led back to the Roman Empire, which formed, as it was, a central point for history in general, subdued the ancient world, and was vanquished by the modern.³⁶⁶

While confronting the Enlightenment's exploration of the physical and moral causes of the rational, linear progress of humanity, Ranke continued the tradition of a historical correlation (*Zusammenhang*) of the German *Aufklärung* to reconstruct the German national past that synchronically projected and illustrated the universal progression of humanity according to the development of European nations.³⁶⁷ In doing so, he inclusively underlined the German contribution to the universal development of humanity and promoted German consciousness exclusively. He thereby contended that "the tribal

³⁶⁶ Ranke, *The History of Serbia and the Serbia Revolution*, 14.

³⁶⁷ Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 37-41.

constitutions [of the German nation] are based upon the concept of individual freedom.”³⁶⁸ The pragmatic knowledge acquired from the tribal past would generate a “national patriotism” by which the German revitalization of the value of freedom would mark the epicenter of both a national and a universal history.³⁶⁹

Additionally, historians were inclined to ascribe contemporary meanings to the antecedent events or figures. Because of the insufficient availability and accessibility of historical documents, Ranke, like many other historians, regularly associated the significances of historical events with contemporary ones. In his *Universal History*, he compared the legend of Cyaxares of the sixth century B.C. with the accomplishment of the German king Henry I (919-936). He argued that Cyaxares could be remembered as “the unconscious prototype” of Henry I. When Henry I attained the crown for the Saxon dynasty without being anointed by a high church official, he “made the Saxons supreme in the German region” in 919.³⁷⁰ By documenting the competition of political powers between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, which he saw as inevitable forces governing the development of universal history, Ranke overcame the inconvenience of studying ancient history, and observed a synchronous nature of the German past in relation to the ancient Roman past. He utilized the comparable nature of historical events as a way of justifying the construction of the modern nation for the purpose of defending individual and national freedoms. It was Ranke’s early “involvement with the Reformation” that motivated him to recover the German past further into ancient history,

³⁶⁸ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 3, I: 39.

³⁶⁹ Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, 46-47.

³⁷⁰ Ranke, *Universal History*, 92.

in order to explicitly define Luther's Reformation as the founding event of *modern* Germany.³⁷¹

In a similar fashion, the association of Tacitus' Germanic past with the larger German past enabled Ranke to formulate a German-centric notion of historical continuity. Although he once wrote that "My studies of ancient times were tied together with the modern age,"³⁷² his strategic construction of the historical correlation between the German and universal pasts merely focused on a cross-sectional (temporal or spatial) analysis. He attempted to ascribe meanings to the past by establishing a connection between the "national" events and a "universal" world history. In perceiving the German nation as a meaningful unit evolving towards a universal history, he was able to identify and reveal the tendencies and forces which guided the historical development of the universe. As he explained:

In every epoch of mankind, a particularly significant tendency thus expresses itself. And the advancement [of mankind] depends upon [the tendency] that would demonstrate [and] peculiarly manifest itself [as] a known movement of human spirit ...³⁷³

Although the representation of the tendency manifested by a particular nation was not "merely ethically neutral," it underlined the "positive values" that seamlessly coalesced with the vital interests of a universal humanity.³⁷⁴ The interest further implied that the

³⁷¹ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 46.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 2: *Über die Epochen der Neueren Geschichte: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, eds. Theodor Schieder and Helmut Berding (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1971), 58-59: "In jeder Epoche der Menschheit äußert sich also ein bestimmte große Tendenz, und der Fortschritt beruht darauf, daß eine gewisse Bewegung des menschlichen Geistes ... sich darstellt ... [und] sich eigentümlich manifestiert."

³⁷⁴ Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, rev. ed. (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 80.

ultimate objective of human universality (*das Allgemeine*) was to pursue individual and communal freedom in the political format of the nation state.³⁷⁵

In Ranke's view, the separation of national sovereignty from the domination of the universal Christendom was historically inevitable in the development of a universal history. It was this contention that moved the Prussian monarchy to unify and transform the German nation into a powerful political entity in the nineteenth century. To address this inevitable assertion, Ranke essentially portrayed the Christian church as a meaningful unit and a historical product that "developed for itself" in medieval Europe.³⁷⁶ Since then, the contesting agnosticism concerning the formation of a universal unison or the preservation of individual freedom propelled the progress of European history. Ranke thereby concluded that it was primarily the "unity of western nations" enforced by the Papacy that constituted the "foundation of world history" of the thirteenth century.³⁷⁷ Indeed, the main feature of medieval Europe was the "inseparable union" of secular and religious powers; from the perspective of political leaders, everything they wanted to accomplish depended upon the survival and success of ecclesiastical institutions.³⁷⁸

Yet, two centuries of Papal domination over Europe did not simply occur unchallenged. Throughout, the Papacy struggled to secure a delicate balance between spirituality (*Geistlichkeit*) and worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*).³⁷⁹ Ranke observed that no distinctive "political or spiritual body" was able to sustain a consistent dominion over the

³⁷⁵ Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 15-19.

³⁷⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 2: *Über die Epochen der Neueren Geschichte*, 160.

³⁷⁷ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 7, II: 402.

³⁷⁸ Ranke, *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France*, vol. 1, 265.

³⁷⁹ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 2: *Über die Epochen der Neueren Geschichte*, 270.

others,³⁸⁰ when the religious authorities and the emerging secular powers collided in the “opposition of particularities and generalities (*Allgemeinen*).”³⁸¹ As the struggle continued into the High Middle Ages, a secular challenge to ecclesiastic unity emerged. It proposed that the establishment of nation-states in Europe was the only way to “correctly bind” the nation and its subjects together.³⁸² Accordingly, the established church in medieval Europe would stand “in the middle of individual rights and the general tendencies of states’ politics.”³⁸³

Ranke’s depiction of the High Middle Ages as a watershed epoch epitomized his search for the historical evidence that would enable him to rationalize the religiously inspired project of German state- and nation-building. To do so, Ranke saw religious institutions ushering in the transition from a defense of tribal freedom to the pursuit of national liberty. Taking the established church as a meaningful unit in both German and European histories allowed him to nationalize the German past without any temporal rupture. This historical scheme principally corresponded to his dualist proposition to synthesize the contesting political models of contemporary Europe.

Once the medieval development of established churches had been analyzed as the midpoint of European (universal) history, Ranke subsequently introduced a German solution to finding the balance between individual rights and a state’s authority. Seeing Martin Luther’s campaign to create a nationalized spiritual body as the German nation’s response to the religious and political transformations of sixteenth-century Europe, Ranke

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 160.

³⁸² Ibid., 270.

³⁸³ Ibid., 160.

envisioned the German fatherland as a nation standing historically and geographically in the middle ground between the ideologies of republicanism and monarchism. Having established the historical reference of a temporal and spatial midpoint, he interpreted the subsequent development of the German political system as a conservative alternative to the European politics of Restoration.³⁸⁴

Since the Protestant Reformation, Luther's challenge to the institutional uniformity of Christian theology had inspired several secular leaders, such as Saxon elector Frederick the Wise, who exploited the unsettling event to regain regional power. The struggles of political domination of Europe seen as the "dissolution," or the "opposition" of the secular and spiritual powers, resulted in the outbreak of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).³⁸⁵ Ranke compared this war with the European Restoration (1814-1848) and depicted Europe's confessional division as a tree growing two opposite branches. He argued, when the war ended in 1648, that European political uniformity was no longer enforced by the Papal authority, but dependent upon "the joint participation (*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*) of institutions and cultures," and upon "the interactions among nations."³⁸⁶

This botanic analogy recognized nations' desire for emancipation and domination as the leading force that led to the development of European nationalism. European nations had experienced liberation from the obedience enforced by the papal hierarchy and struggled to fill the political vacuum created by the decline of the established churches in Europe. Taking western nations' efforts to defy the papal construction of the

³⁸⁴ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 173-175.

³⁸⁵ Ranke, *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France*, vol. 1, 265.

³⁸⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 2: *Über die Epochen der Neueren Geschichte*, 326.

“single political-ecclesiastical states” as the mundane reference of national emancipation,³⁸⁷ Ranke essentially concluded that, in post-Revolutionary Europe, a perennial nation-state could only be established when an “agreement of spiritual and worldly power was adherent.”³⁸⁸ The Lutheran Reformation and the ensuing religious wars were the indispensable plots of Ranke’s historical narratives, by which Protestant princes’ secular motives and states as the dominating institutions of the world were legitimized.³⁸⁹ Accordingly, the nation-state effectively became the “dominant organizing principle” in Ranke’s master narrative of universal history.³⁹⁰ When these two allegedly opposite secular and spiritual powers harmoniously collaborated in *Mitteleuropa*, the making of the German nation and the projected unification of the German empire represented the culmination of Ranke’s emplotment of universal history, mostly the history of European continent.³⁹¹

Based on this framework of universal history, Ranke presented Europe as a narrative unit and a spiritual unity (*geistige Einheit*), which was constituted by multiple national groups sharing common attributes while possessing their respective individualities. This imagery of Europe as a whole enabled him to consistently adapt the narrative structure of universal history within his works on European nations. As he explained,

The states and empires of Europe are often held to be more independent of and more distinctive from each other than they really are. They belong, however, to the general community of peoples

³⁸⁷ Ranke, *History of the Popes*, vol. 1, 25.

³⁸⁸ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 6, I: 19.

³⁸⁹ Bahners, “National unification and narrative unity,” 63.

³⁹⁰ H. Glenn Penny, “The Fate of the Nineteenth Century in German Historiography,” *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008), 82.

³⁹¹ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 6, I: 19; White, *Metahistory*, 163-190.

of the West, which rests upon common bases, and has grown up from elements near akin to each other; from which community each [nation] has risen to a separate existence, without, however, ever tearing itself away from the whole.³⁹²

Thus, each nation possesses established and perennial elements or characteristics that differentiate them. By comparing the first Huguenot War of France in 1562 and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day of 1572 with the French Revolution of 1789, he argued that "the habit of repaying violent deeds with violent deeds," which characterized "the Romantic nations even at the present day," was "the general custom of France."³⁹³ Therefore, negating the French notion of revolutionary republicanism, he justified the Prussian-led German unification as a critical anti-French initiative in the formation of national politics in Europe.

Although the collective task of nation-building was unambiguously political, historians and politicians were expected to perform their responsibilities separately. Ranke contended that the politician could not "model himself on precedents [because] the world is ever changing and the sum of political wisdom consists in insight into the present as it develops itself."³⁹⁴ Historians should therefore help politicians to distill the essential characteristics of the fatherland from the national and the universal pasts. The collaboration between the two, as Ranke suggested in his inaugural address of 1836, was pursued in the manner that the politicians take up "where historians left off," study "the essence of his state under the guidance of the historian," and cultivate "it in the current

³⁹² Ranke, *A History of England principally in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 4, 369.

³⁹³ Ranke, *Civil Wars and Monarchy in France*, vol. 1, 323.

³⁹⁴ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, vol. 2, 460.

transactions of government and embodied it in the new legislation.”³⁹⁵ Ranke hence concluded that because politicians “transplanted the essence of his state from the past into the future,” the nation’s “continuity and identity” could be politically and historically guarded and secured.³⁹⁶ When Ranke imagined Germany as a historical nation and compiled a distinctive national history based upon the framework of a universal history, he essentially concentrated his historical investigation on identifying all sorts of transnational tendencies. With each successful allocation of the necessary essences that characterized the German nation in a historical universality, he was able to facilitate the institutional formation of a German identity, and to legitimize the imperative for the building a modern nation-state.

IV: Ranke’s nationalist historiography of Germany

In his nationalist construction of German history within the narrative framework of universal history, Ranke aimed to accomplish dual tasks. First, to position Germany within the Eurocentric development of nationalism, he ascribed a world-historical mission to the national movement as “a central pillar of the nascent German national identity.”³⁹⁷ Secondly, in preparing a paradigmatic practice for historical scholarship, he used history as an institutional apparatus to provide the justification for political unification. He stated that “the national element in historiography lies not in the material only but also in the perspective on it; our national perspective is the more universal

³⁹⁵ Ranke, “*De Historiae et Politices Congnatione atque Discrimine*” (inaugural address to University of Berlin, 1836). Quote from Laue, *Leopold von Ranke*, 83.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

³⁹⁷ Brian Vick, “The Origins of the German Volk: Cultural Purity and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” *German Studies Review* 26 (2003), 246.

one.”³⁹⁸ The historian’s ability to identify the universal tendencies or leading ideas within the textual boundaries of national history further determined his commitment to objective historical research. Ranke suggested that if historians could objectively present historical evidences and reflectively explicate universal tendencies in their nationalist historiography, they could circumvent the onus of political impartiality and further their agenda of validating the essentiality of building a nation-state in the modern era.

Ranke attested to the idea that the development of a universal history was driven by competition among nations for the leading role in the pursuit of universal humanity. If the premise could be established on the systematic grounds of objective science, the concerns of subjectivity permeating nationalist historiographies could be mitigated. Ranke argued that, post-Reformation, the emergence of the French nation upset the balance between papal authority and secular principalities, and provoked a popular awareness of diverse nationalities in Europe. He wrote:

The empire, the papacy, the council (*Konzilien*), [and] the Reformation declined. Men stepped in two opposite parties. During this struggle, an overbalanced nation emerged. Louis XIV dominated [all of] Europe. Various nations were against France. It was this feeling of nationality that dominated the new epoch.³⁹⁹

The struggle for national recognition incited Germans’ quest for a unified nation-state as their exclusive, nineteenth-century mission. Ranke argued that, “in the battles of individual groups of peoples, universal history arises and the nationalities themselves are

³⁹⁸ Quote from Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 311.

³⁹⁹ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 100: “Das Kaisertum zerfällt; das Papsttum; die Konzilien; die Reformation; man trat in zwei Parteien auseinander; in dem Kampf, der daher entsprang, überwog immer Eine Nation. Ludwig XIV. beherrschte ganz Europa. Die verschiedenen Nationalitäten sahen sich den Franzosen gegenüber. Es ist dies Gefühl der Nationalität, was die neure Zeit beherrscht.”

brought to self-awareness.”⁴⁰⁰ By implementing the principle of the primacy of foreign policy in historical study, German historians could confirm the world-historical significance of the German project of nation-building. Ranke wrote:

When the German research has been applied to the history of foreign nations, it will be governed by the same world-historical (*universalhistorische*) aspect. Also, in this respect, a distinction should be made. If necessary, [the process of] nation- and state-building, such as the French and English nation, will realize itself in totality without leaving its mark on local or provincial [issues]. One could highlight the period following a general influence and reconsider its motive.⁴⁰¹

Accordingly, the emergence of modern European nations and the making of a unified German nation intersected as one crucially integral force dominating the development of universal history.

In a similar fashion, historians interpreted the stories of the formation of modern nations as the basic components of a universal humanity and applied these nation-centered narratives to their formulation of a universal history. In 1828, Ranke compared universal history with his preliminary understanding of modern Europe, and asserted that each nation had its chances to govern the monumental transition of a specific epoch. He observed that there were several epic events that individual nations epitomized, such as the Italian Renaissance, France under Louis XIV, the making of English parliament, and the arrival of the German age in the nineteenth century.⁴⁰² Each epoch essentially

⁴⁰⁰ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 250.

⁴⁰¹ Ranke, “Savonarola und die florentinische Republik gegen Ende des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts,” in his *Historisch-biographische Studien* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1877), 183: “Wenn die deutsche Forschung sich auch auf die Geschichte fremder Nationen erstreckt, so ist der dabei vorwaltende Gesichtspunkt der universalhistorische. Auch in dieser Beziehung mag jedoch ein Unterschied gemacht werden. Nationen und Staatengebilde, wie die von Frankreich und von England, hat man das Bedürfnis, sich in ihrer Totalität zu vergegenwärtigen, immer ohne auf das Local und Provinzielle einzugehen, indem man vielmehr die Perioden, in denen sie eine allgemeine Einwirkung ausübten, hervorhebt und deren Motive erörtert.”

⁴⁰² Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 177.

represented one particular centurial milestone. Therefore, to determine Germans' significant presence in the landmark development of universal humanity, Ranke devoted his early career to studying the histories of other western nations prior to the nineteenth century because these non-German histories were not only the preceding justification of his articulation of the nineteenth century as the age of Germany, but also the indispensable foreign ingredients for impartially and inclusively compiling a German-centric universal history.

Nevertheless, Ranke's scheme of a universal development was not immune to criticism. In 1865, Ranke's disciple Georg Waitz, the founder of a renowned school of medievalists at the University of Göttingen, questioned Ranke's credibility on the histories of the Popes and other European nations. In his responses to Waitz and the members participating in the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*, Ranke provided two rational explanations regarding his focus on the preceding non-German centurial milestones. First, he could not extract sufficient world-historical significance from the German past during those centuries, and second, these nations' pasts were "decisive" to the development of the German nation.⁴⁰³ Therefore, to specifically address Germany's national contribution to the advancement of universal humanity when Europeans emancipated themselves from Papal domination, Ranke interpreted individual German achievement, such as Luther's challenge to the Catholic doctrine, with a nationalist cause. In this way, his inquiries of the local medieval past of the German region did not intend to restore the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, but to focus diligently on how the local and

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 483-484.

personal past should be presented as an integral part of the total history of the German nation.

Ranke visualized an uninterrupted flow of narrative unity in historicizing the formation of the German nation. He deliberately represented the construction of the universal church in medieval Europe as the precursor of institutional centralization for the modern nation state. As he argued,

We believe that the history of the Middle Ages generally [is] part of universal history, because it is the continuation of the ancient [history and] the genesis of the new world. The ancient [history] in general includes the early history (*frühere Geschichte*) of mankind. The [history] of the Middle Ages passes one good piece (*Stück*) further, [and] contains the first element of the history of our state and institution.⁴⁰⁴

This practice of establishing historical continuity suggested that the development of universal humanity developed over time and drew from the immediate human affairs of a historian's present.

The organic analogy of a botanic rami nurtured by a deeply rooted plant had been utilized in Ranke's reference to the interrelationship between the local pasts and the national past. In a letter to the members of the Historical Commission of Munich, Ranke addressed the value of creating a professional collaboration for local historians to historically calibrate a dynamic relationship among the local, national and universal pasts. He encouraged local historians "not to quest for an absolute uniformity by making all particularities disappear"; but to find "a connection with varied native endeavors of a

⁴⁰⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 344-345: "Wir fassen die Geschichte des Mittelalters überhaupt als einen Teil der allgemeinen Geschichte: denn es ist die Fortsetzung der alten, die Genesis der neuen Welt. Das Altertum enthält die frühere Geschichte der Menschheit überhaupt. Das Mittelalter führt diese ein gutes Stück weiter, aber vor allem enthält es den ersten Teil der Geschichte unserer Staaten und unserer Institutionen."

region in defense of necessary unity.”⁴⁰⁵ Accordingly, Ranke’s nationalist historiography attempted to accomplish a two-fold task. It would include local particularism while reflecting the domestic diversity of the German region since the sixteenth century. The Germans would externally forge an exclusive sense of unity while facing foreign cultural and political threats to the very existence of the German nation. In his examination of German history between 1780 and 1790 and the violence of the French Revolution and Napoleon’s occupation, Ranke anticipated that German readers would not hesitate to support the Prussian project of unification.⁴⁰⁶

Emphasis upon the permanent development of universal humanity in nationalist historiography further enriched the historical representation of a native nation and its correlation with the past and present of foreign nations. Three years after the German unification, in 1874, Ranke candidly confirmed that he “developed” his “historical theory” of German historiography based on the historical “correlation between the year of 1792 [the Napoleonic Wars] and the year 1871 [the Franco-Prussian War].”⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, he employed this correlation as a means of disclosing the historical position of Germany in the western world, and to defend himself against his colleagues’ accusations of a partisan, Prussocentric agenda.

Nevertheless, as Ernest Renan’s had warned, the conflict between political patriotism and professional neutrality would eventually obstruct a historian’s compilation of nationalist historiography. To alleviate this probable conflict of interest, Ranke

⁴⁰⁵ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 581-582.

⁴⁰⁶ Ranke, *Die deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund: Deutsche Geschichte von 1780 bis 1790* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1871), vol. 1, 106.

⁴⁰⁷ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, eds. Walther Peter Fuchs and Theodor Schieder (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1964), 416.

distinguished nationalist historiography, which was exclusively narrated within the context of universal history, from the ideal universal history that was inclusively comprised of the past of all nations. Ranke's inclusion of the German past in the course of universal history, by design, justified the historical necessity of the internal consolidation of the German nation. He argued that there is an undisturbed "principle of communal live of mankind," which vindicates every nation's presence in ethnic terms, and "unites and governs the nation itself without [aggressively] expanding itself."⁴⁰⁸ As Leonard Krieger contends, when Ranke assigned "the explicit priority of the historical object to foreign history, the explicit role of the historian's subjective [account] in native history, and the synthesis of both to world history," the alleged contradictions negated each other.⁴⁰⁹ His solution was to elevate nationalist historiography to a world-historical platform, on which the burden of employing subjective processes was mitigated by the objective pursuit of universal truth.

Ranke's formulation of the historical correlation between the national and universal pasts also reflected his scholarly reaction to the sociopolitical crisis of his private and professional lives. On the one hand, he conceptualized nationalist historiography based upon the assumption that "the nation-state was the primary object of historical study," and "the historian's task lay principally in the study of the origins and development of states and in their relations with one another."⁴¹⁰ He, on the other hand, undertook a historicist "application of historical analysis" to respond to the "unsolved

⁴⁰⁸ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 7, II: 4.

⁴⁰⁹ Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 349.

⁴¹⁰ Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 22.

tensions in German life” since the eighteenth century.⁴¹¹ This application, as Peter Reill contends, operated on a “dualistic principle,” and attempted to “mediate between conflicting ideas such as change and continuity, individuality and communal being, freedom and necessity, and value and causality.”⁴¹² The principle enabled Ranke to meticulously follow the rigorous methods of source criticism while promoting the Prussocentric nationalism of Germany. He stated that it was only possible “in one’s mind (*Geist*)” to “compile a national history as a comprehensive work with grand style.”⁴¹³ While consistently carrying a “patriotic mind” (*dem patriotischen Gedanken*), he constructed the “general history of Germany (*allgemeine deutsche Geschichte*)” and envisioned a community of European powers under God’s master plan.⁴¹⁴

Nevertheless, the general history of Germany merely concentrated on the historical phenomena related to the progress of universal humanity. Ranke suggested that a historian should “make the past life of a foreign nation the object of a comprehensive literary work,” and only “direct his eyes to those epochs which have had the most effectual influence on the development of mankind.”⁴¹⁵ When the nation-state was analyzed as the primary core of historical study, historical objectivity would be determined by how the historian presented the individual nation as a meaningful unit, which fulfilled the idea of universal humanity. Ranke henceforth concluded that “modern nations are the first product of [universal] history,”⁴¹⁶ and the universal history

⁴¹¹ Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, 213-214.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche, Neue Sammlung*, 487.

⁴¹⁴ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 7, I: 1.

⁴¹⁵ Ranke, *A History of England principally in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 1, vi.

⁴¹⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 355.

was not “assembled by histories of individual countries,” but constituted a nation’s “self-understandings (*selbst Begriffenes*)” and its correlation with all others.⁴¹⁷ As a result, whether the national historians could present the nation’s past in accordance with the renowned Rankean dictum, as it actually happened, became less significant.

Through employment of historiographical forgetting, Ranke deliberately selected and arranged historical materials to establish a discursive correlation between the nationalist historiography of Germany and a universal history. By advocating for the world-historical significance of the German nation in the development of universal humanity, he incorporated his subjective perception of the German past into an allegedly objective presentation of universal history. By doing so, the presumed neutrality of the historical profession superseded one’s subjective national identity. Ranke’s solution to the “antagonism between critical consciousness and the allure of duty,” as Gunter Berg argues, was thereby “directly decided by contemporary history.”⁴¹⁸ In other words, Ranke’s strategic deployment of ideas like “epicenter,” “turning point,” “midpoint stage,” “watershed event,” “centurial milestone,” and “landmark development” to conceptualize the historical correlation was essentially based upon two assumptions. First, he imagined that history evolved in a continuous and meaningful fashion. Second, in this historicist understanding of human past, nations acted as the primary agent in the manifestation of a universal humanity. Nevertheless, as Michel Foucault suggests in his discussion on power and discourse, “any approach to history that stresses continuity from formative beginnings superimposes on the past a pattern that, when deconstructed, contains a

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Berg, *Leopold von Ranke als akademischer Lehrer*, 189.

hidden agenda.”⁴¹⁹ If Ranke’s favoritism of Prussocentric nationalism remained unseen and unchallenged in his conception of historical correlation, the historical objectivity and the “objective reality” of the historical discipline could only be defined relative to the “attainability of a more objective truth in all things.”⁴²⁰

Accordingly, Renan’s predicament would not occur because Ranke’s nationalist historiography exemplified how the progress of historical scholarship favorably complimented the fulfillment of historical university, in which the principle of nationality governed its development. Ranke’s normative discourse of national and universal pasts represented practical effort to institutionalize a collective German consciousness and to legitimize the Prussian project of German unification. As a result, nationalist historiography needed to be considered an “unstable narrative” or a narrative in motion, which aimed to explain the past and the present, and to help forecast the future by stabilizing the national past from one’s subjective reminiscence to the normative past that objectively reflected the national pursuit of universal humanity.

⁴¹⁹ Quote from Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1993), 112.

⁴²⁰ Berg, *Leopold von Ranke als akademischer Lehrer*, 189.

CHAPTER 5 - The Pursuit of Historical Objectivity

Ranke's conception of historical scholarship was embedded in the nascent development of the historical discipline, which sought to empower professional historians to restore the "objective reality" within the parameters of a nationalist historiography. Because the core obligation of the historical profession was to rectify fallacies in people's memories and to recover or discover the authentic past, historical scholarship played a critical role in the construction of national memories and myths since the nineteenth century. As Georg Iggers and his disciples argue, "in theory there is a clear dividing line between scholarship and legend; in practice they are closely related in the historical imagination."⁴²¹ In Ranke's "unstable narrative" of history, unsurprisingly, his idea of historical objectivity collided with his subjective ambitions. The tension was apparent: while Ranke, as a professional historian, employed rigorous scientific methods to pursue historical objectivity, as a public intellectual he acknowledged his inability to conceal personal sympathy toward the establishment of monarchical politics and his abiding support of the Prussian-led German unification.

In order to mitigate the probable conflict of persona and to settle the "unstable narrative," Ranke practically proposed a working conception of historiographical forgetting that entailed deliberately selecting and arranging historical materials while conducting objective inquiries. He suggested that historians possess three indispensable characteristics in order to perform their professional search for the authentic past. These included a healthy common sense, the courage not to be intimidated by the impacts of his

⁴²¹ Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), 3-4.

inquiries to his present, and the honesty not to deceive the historian himself in the future.⁴²² These attributes essentially characterized Ranke's nationalist historiography. In meticulously administering the professionalization of the historical discipline, he suggested that modern historiography should represent the progress and change of universal humanity and account for continuity in geographical and chronological spaces for the purpose of understanding the sociopolitical transformations of nineteenth-century Europe.

I: Historians' construction of the authentic past

Ranke's notion of a professional self was based on an explicit belief in the existence of universal truth and one's ability to restore this truth through objective study of the past. Historians' construction or restoration of the authentic past began with their efforts to collect all available historical facts. Ranke wrote, "If I could not collect all available information, upon which her power is based, and wish to exhilarate her flight on the ground where I gain attention, Clio would resent it with justice (*Recht*)."⁴²³ Early in his career, Ranke had yearned for a historical craft that could "conceive the world with its [own] ideas as it has constructed itself and the human races as they have procreated themselves."⁴²⁴ Yet, to represent the past as it happened, historians additionally needed to acknowledge that the historical truth simply existed "in the knowledge of fact," and was "the thing (*die Sache*)," which principally expressed itself and was not "given in

⁴²² Leopold von Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, eds. Walther Peter Fuchs and Theodor Schieder (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1964), 240.

⁴²³ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Alfred Dove (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890), 489.

⁴²⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 233.

general.”⁴²⁵ The truth would promptly reveal itself, if historians were able to retrieve, restore, and represent historical events of the past in their authenticity.

In this formulation, the truth transcends distinctive boundaries of geographical and chronological spaces. As Leonard Krieger observes, in Ranke’s historical works “only universal truths (regardless to the past or the present) could be the criteria of the truth of the past.”⁴²⁶ Before Ranke was able to ascertain the universal truths in the past, as Theodore Laue argues, he had presumably recognized the nature of the simplicity and purity of historical truth.⁴²⁷ Evidently, as a devout follower of Lutheran theology, Ranke considered history to be the byproduct of a divine plan, the study of which functioned as a means to observe the manifestation of God’s will. His plan to grasp universal truths through historical study thereby corresponded to his struggles to conceptualize the tension between the spiritual forces and the secular powers that Europeans had been experiencing since the beginning of the modern age.

Nevertheless, the historian’s objective depiction of past events was principally a secular instrument for constructing an authentic image for the historical past without revealing any theological intervention. Ranke stated that it was the historian’s exclusive obligation to learn to understand the meaning of each epoch “with total impartiality,” in which “God’s arrangement” was embedded.⁴²⁸ He further contended that historians must understand two things: first, that “God’s order” is “identical with the sequence of time,” and, second, that every important individual must have his position in God’s working of

⁴²⁵ Quote from Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 4.

⁴²⁶ Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 156.

⁴²⁷ Theodore Laue, *Leopold von Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 45.

⁴²⁸ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walter Peter Fuchs (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1494), 518-519.

the universe.⁴²⁹ Therefore, historians' objective investigation of the past served as a means not only to seek out "authenticity and truth (*Echte und Wahre*)," but also to find the past's "immediate reference with the highest question of mankind."⁴³⁰ The historian's construction of the authentic past was thereby a discursive amalgam of a professional assurance of historical objectivity and a personal conviction of the divine plan.

Ranke envisioned history as an organic development, in which the seeds of the human spirit matured over time. One could easily comprehend the universal law of humanity without searching beyond the disciplinary boundary set by the historical profession. When Ranke reflected upon his professional career, he wrote:

I do not deceive myself, or pass the province of history, in supposing that I discover here, and in seeking to indicate, one of the universal laws of social life. It is unquestionably true that there are at all periods forces of the living mind by which the world is moved profoundly; gradually prepared in the long course of bygone centuries, they arise in the fullness of time, called forth by natures of intrinsic might and vigor from the unfathomed depth of the human spirit.⁴³¹

Accordingly, the historian's construction of the authentic past was merely the first step to comprehending and illustrating the progression of a universal humanity.

Historians differentiated their construction of the authentic past from artists' representation of past reality by demonstrating their competency in the rigorous criticism of factual information. Ranke argued that the historical tradition could be objectively recollected, and not romantically reconstructed,⁴³² if historians turned away from

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ Ranke, *History of the Popes: Their Church and State*, trans. E. Fowler (1901; repr., New York: Frederick Ungar, 1966), vol. 2, 247.

⁴³² Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 61.

historical fiction, such as the works of Walter Scott, and agreed to “avoid any invention and imagination,” and kept their works “strictly to the facts.”⁴³³ He wrote:

No one could be more convinced than I that historical research requires the strictest method: criticism of the authors, the banning of all fables, [and] the extraction of the pure facts (*des reinen Factums*). But I am also convinced that this fact had a spiritual content. For the actual fact (*die Tatsache*) is not [what we see from] the external periphery. The external appearance is not the final thing which we have to discover; [rather,] there is still something which occurs within. The event occurs only as the result of a spiritually combined series of actions.⁴³⁴

This statement unambiguously exemplified Ranke’s attempts to define history as a scientific discipline whose methodology was inspired by the German tradition of philology. History functioned not merely as an artistic representation of the past, but as a scholarly assignment of representing the past as it factually and spiritually (*geistlich*) happened.

To extract the pure facts and to restore the studied past with authenticity, historians needed to dismiss (read: forget) all the fabricated stories through the critique of sources and authors. According to Ranke, historical fact was not the past that a historian recollected by detaching his present from the subject of study, but rather the past that the historian *intuitively* reconstructed by correlating a series of historical actions with transcendent universal ideas. In this way, the compilation of a general history for a

⁴³³ Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, trans. and ed. Roger Wines (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 38.

⁴³⁴ Quote from Gunter Berg, *Leopold von Ranke als akademischer Lehrer: Studien zu seinen Vorlesungen und seinen Geschichtsdenken* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 212; originally from Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 519: “Niemand kann mehr davon überzeugt sein als ich, daß die historische Forschung dir strengste Method fordert; Kritik der Autoren, Entfernung alles Fabelhaften; Herausschaffung des reinen Faktums; aber dabei bin ich doch auch überzeugt, daß dieses Faktum dann wieder einen geistigen Inhalt hat. Die Tatsache ist nicht die äußerste Grenze. Das äußerlich Geschehende ist nicht des Letzte, was wir zu erkennen haben; es gibt etwas, was darin geschieht. Erst aus einer gestig kombinierten Reihe von Tatsachen resultiert das Ereignis.”

specific European nation required understanding national traditions and universal values. In particular, Ranke suggested that national history as a discursive representation of national identity initially derived from a national cultural heritage of folklore, such as poetry and song. Its presumed legacy was deliberately preserved and constituted by people's nearly forgotten memories of ancient times and the recollection of the "latest splendor of the nation and her downfall."⁴³⁵

The national memories inspired by the tradition of folklore, as Eric Hobsbawm argues, were highly selective and intended to provoke a collective sentiment of belonging by emphasizing commonly shared national greatness and shame.⁴³⁶ Ranke's ideal discourse of national history also had its roots in the nation's development of a "literal culture" that possessed "a harmonious and vivid narrative" of the past.⁴³⁷ He contended that the fundamental essence of national history should comprehensively include "all epochs" that were "true to fact" based upon the historian's objective research, and the narrative should be aesthetically "attractive to the readers."⁴³⁸ The ultimate goal of nationalist historiography was thus to help the nation to "attain a perfect self-consciousness," "to feel the pulsation of its life throughout the story," and to be "fully acquainted with its own origin, growth and character."⁴³⁹

Yet, when Ranke evaluated the national histories of previous generations of historians, he considered their presentations of "the cores of tradition" in the format of

⁴³⁵ Ranke, *The History of Servia and the Servian Revolution*, trans. Mrs. Alexander Kerr (London: Henry G. Dohn, 1853), 52.

⁴³⁶ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14.

⁴³⁷ Ranke, *A History of England principally in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. unknown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), vol. 1, v.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

“fables and exotic stories” as “imaginative” and not “factual.”⁴⁴⁰ Therefore, to impartially address the issue of how historians should respectively articulate and propagate national traditions and national identities, Ranke advocated that historians implement historiographical forgetting in their attempts to reconstruct the authentic past for a specific nation. To do so, they needed to extract and discard (forget) all the possible subjective elements of imagination from the documented facts, and to subordinate the remaining actual facts to the discursive elements, which, by design, aimed to support historians’ objective reconstruction of the national past within the context of universal history.

Practically, a historian should maintain his professional neutrality by alienating himself from the contemporary advancement of sociopolitical interests. In his *History of England* (1859-1869), Ranke warned historians that introducing “the interests of the present time into the work of the historian usually ends in restricting its free accomplishment.”⁴⁴¹ He particularly suggested that historians suppress their own subjectivity in order to impartially present the historical events of foreign nations. As mentioned in chapter one, the suppression of historians’ self-identification in their historical works could only be accomplished through the employment of voluntary forgetting of current sociopolitical preferences and agenda. Through the strategic implementation of therapeutic and historiographical forgetting, historians were able to defend the disciplinary objectivity, and to enlist themselves as indispensable members of the community of historical scholarship. Ranke advocated that “the historian must have

⁴⁴⁰ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, eds. Alfred Dove, Theodor Wiedermann and Goerg Winter (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1883-1888), vol. 2, I: 78.

⁴⁴¹ Ranke, *A History of England*, vol. 1, xi.

the coldness of the natural scientist, who dispassionately analyses, scales, measures objects, and acquires results from the unperturbed (*unbeirrten*) study.”⁴⁴² Thus, historians’ suppression of their subjective selves was both a historical and a scientific attempt to prevent objective research from being subjectively interfered with by any “interest of human object (*Teilnahme den menschlichen Dingen*).”⁴⁴³

Nevertheless, human interests were generally the subjective reflections of one’s imagination of the objective reality. To “apprehend” historical truth, Ranke suggested that historians employ historiographical forgetting to “dissolve” their “subjective view underneath the objective truth.”⁴⁴⁴ He further stated that if the historian could not “repel the human perceptions” there would be no “objective historical truth in history.”⁴⁴⁵ Therefore, the goal of objectifying historical study was “to get free from the trammels of established tradition, to gain mastery over the immediate circumstances and issues of life, [and] to see the past as a present, as it were, with our own eyes.”⁴⁴⁶

To defend the new guidelines in the objective reconstruction of the historical past, Ranke criticized historians’ work for their failure to achieve historical objectivity. He commented on Bishop Gilbert Burnet’s *History of My Own Time* (published posthumously, 1724-1734), and viewed it as the archetypical prejudiced historical account, because “Burnet was not so remote from affairs as not to hear of them, but on

⁴⁴² Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, eds. Volker Dotterweich and Walther Peter Fuchs (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1975), 459.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 268.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ranke, *A History of England*, vol. 5, 427.

the other hand he was not near enough to attain to real and exact knowledge.”⁴⁴⁷ Ranke thereby advocated that historians approach the historical past by performing two tasks simultaneously in order to avoid writing partisan history. They needed to disengage themselves from the preconceived conventions that influenced their subjective perceptions of reality, and, at the same time, to maintain a manageable distance to the present and comprehend the historical past in an identical fashion with the eyewitness reports of contemporary events. Ranke expected historians to act not only as *remote observers*, who would keep their traditions from dictating and intervening their inquiries of the past, but also as *immediate bystanders*, who could perceive past reality under the governance of the traditions of the studied past.

Ranke proposed a distinctive separation of persona to additionally clarify historians’ stances when documenting contemporary incidents and historical events. For instance, Ranke did not hesitate to express his excitement of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and to commemorate the significance of the political unification of Germany, when he momentarily avoiding identifying himself a professional historian. He wrote:

I will not speak as a historian who conducts historical research because the events [Franco-Prussia War] are too new and too few memorandums are available. Instead, [I would like to talk about the wars] as one of the million people, who have participated in the events and commemorate the effect, which has been gradually growing along with their development.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 6, 71.

⁴⁴⁸ Ranke, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche, Neue Sammlung*, eds. Alfred Dove and Theodor Wiedemann (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1888), 557: “Doch will ich nicht als Historiker zu Geschichtsforschern redder — denn dazu sind die Dinge zu neu und dir vorliegenden Notizen zu wenig gesichtet — sondern nur als einer von den Millionen, die an den Ereignissen Antheil genommen haben, des Eindrucks gedenken, den sie schrittweise in ihrer Entwicklung hervorbrachten.”

With the disciplinary objectivity in mind, historians should only study events that happened in the distant past and that came with sufficient documentation, especially the eyewitness reports.

Historian's construction of the authentic past was problematic, however, if he or she was not consciously aware that some historical documents, reports or memorandums were purposely recorded and preserved to embellish the significance of certain events. Ranke suggested that only when historians showed "no true sympathy" toward the past, would they then be able to allegedly assert "purer and less partial views of history."⁴⁴⁹ More importantly, only if the past contained no direct influence on historians' present could they interpret and comprehend the studied past impartially. Ranke once admitted that he was able to investigate the history of the Popes with objectivity because the Papal power "no longer exercises any essential influence and nor does it produce any solicitude in us."⁴⁵⁰ He continued, arguing that since "we have nothing to fear toward the [Papal] past and now feel perfectly secured, ... the Papacy can currently inspire us with no other interest than what results from the development of its history and its preceding influence."⁴⁵¹ Namely, it was Ranke's Protestant faith and German heritage that prompted him to present and interpret the Papal past without the interference of his contemporary sociopolitical bias.

The historian's articulation of an impartial discourse of history depended upon his ability to perceive the studied past with objectivity. It could not be established on the basis of a historian's present perspective on the studied past. That is, it needed to be

⁴⁴⁹ Ranke, *History of the Popes*, vol. 1, ix.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

based upon the historian's comprehension of the leading ideas of the studied past and the sequential evolutions that *meaningfully correlated* with the immediate present of the historian. Ranke wrote:

Every century has the tendency to consider itself most progressive, and to measure all other centuries according to its own ideas. That is why we study history. An epoch must always be brought to a realization of its own image and of how it came to be.⁴⁵²

This notion of depicting the past in its own image, on the one hand, reflected the famous Rankean dictum of studying the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen*. On the other hand, similar to the artist and the military general defined in Nietzsche's study of forgetting, historians needed to avoid any possible interference of bias by detaching themselves from the present through unremembering.⁴⁵³ Therefore, historians' employment of historiographical forgetting to selectively reconstruct the studied past became a normative procedure in their pursuit of historical objectivity.

Ranke's endorsement of the historian's application of neutrality to the studied past primarily originated from his presumption that historian should not act as a judge, whose duty was to resolve a legal dispute by interrogating the case of the past. Rather, the historian should act as the one who documented the past case in its authenticity by disclosing any fallacies of the case for the betterment of his or her present and future. Ranke argued that

⁴⁵² Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 257.

⁴⁵³ See Chapter 1.

The historian is not bound to determine doubtful points of law; the assumption of the right to decide in such cases would only interfere with his impartiality. ... [And] a historian is not called upon to set himself up as a judge in disputed points of law.⁴⁵⁴

Accordingly, historian should not infuse his judgment of past events with his contemporary ideas and values.

However, throughout his career, Ranke's stance on historical judgment was inconsistent. When Ranke affiliated himself with the historical profession, he personally confirmed that historians were obligated to judge the past merely upon the perceptions of the present in order to benefit the historical development of the future. In his first historical work, *History of the Latin and Teutonic Nations*, he wrote:

History has had assigned to it the office of judging the past and of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such high offices the present work does not presume; it seeks only to show what actually [or essentially] happened.⁴⁵⁵

Yet, in response to Hegel's disciple Heinrich Leo's skepticism and in defense of the historian's abilities to restore and narrate the authentic past as it happened, Ranke reiterated that historians had no intention of lying, but merely wanted to research the past "where originality, peculiar viewpoint, and richness of lives were."⁴⁵⁶ Notably, in his formative years, Ranke primarily attempted to accomplish a vivid reconstruction of the past in which its originality and peculiarity could be seamlessly identified in a discursive correlation with his present and future. To facilitate the instructive function of history and to "evaluate" the past phenomenon on its own terms, historians needed to personally

⁴⁵⁴ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, [Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg and History of Prussia, during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries], trans. Sir Alex and Lady Duff Gordon (London: John Murray, 1849), vol. 2, 108-114.

⁴⁵⁵ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 7.

⁴⁵⁶ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 663.

“experience much and live through a great epoch in its total development
(*Gesamtentwicklung*).”⁴⁵⁷

Accordingly, the historian’s construction of the authentic past began at the locations where the original documents were deposited. Ranke rejected the notion that historians were capable of investigating the very origins of human society, because the advancement of historical knowledge was determined by one’s accessibility to the art of writing, a relatively recent invention in the long history of human civilization.⁴⁵⁸ He thereby asserted that “history begins at the point where monuments become intelligible and trustworthy documentary evidences are available ... [and] from this point onwards, its domain is boundless.”⁴⁵⁹

Archives stood as historians’ exclusive laboratories and sanctuaries for their search for the authentic past. Being physically isolated in the archives enabled the historian to liberally exercise “the unlimited capacity of [historical] study” to strategically disengage his present self, and to critically perform an independent examination of the archival sources.⁴⁶⁰ As Bonnie Smith contends, archives not only “revealed facts and evidence from which the historian impartially and rationally constructed a scientific account of past reality,” but also “provided a place where scenarios of pollution and danger might be envisioned.”⁴⁶¹ Historians consciously imagined the archive as “a place of mystery,” where they could conveniently compare their archival practices with scientists’ ambitions

⁴⁵⁷ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 546.

⁴⁵⁸ Ranke, *Universal History: the Oldest Historical Group of Nations and the Greeks*, ed. G. W. Prothero (New York: Harper & Brother, 1885), ix.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, x; Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1, I: vi.

⁴⁶⁰ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 613.

⁴⁶¹ Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 119.

to access and conquer forbidden knowledge.⁴⁶² Archives created the physical and intellectual distance between historians and their subjects of investigation that assured an objective approach to the historical past. Ranke concluded that this gap had “been an advantage over the description of that which lies before [historians] in the past,”⁴⁶³ because it enabled historians to critically examine the archival sources recorded by their contemporaries, to impartially comprehend past events, and thus to rectify the fallacies documented by previous historians.

Evidently, historians’ use of archival sources to amend the inaccuracies documented in previous historical narratives was one of the principal components of Ranke’s dictum. It was this ambition and insistence on the strictest practice of archival research that enabled Ranke to differentiate his concept of the historical discipline from previous ideas of historiography. As he explained:

Man no longer writes contemporary history by following the tradition that previous writers established and then persisted in, but from the direct memories of recent centuries, which were discovered in archives, relations, correspondences, and various kinds of documents ...⁴⁶⁴

This new proposition of using archival sources rather than established traditions to investigate the recent past effectively authorized indefinite opportunities for scrutinizing previous historical narratives and constructing a veritable account of the recent past. As Gunter Berg contends, Ranke’s career exemplified that the ultimate objective in pursuing the authentic past was to obtain the objective truth in every aspect of human affairs and to

⁴⁶² Ibid., 119-120.

⁴⁶³ Ranke, *A History of England*, vol. 5, 427.

⁴⁶⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 415: “Man schreibt die neuere Geschichte nicht mehr nach der Tradition, welche frühere Schriftsteller gebildet hatten und die sich dann fortsetzte, sonder aus den unmittelbaren Denkmalen der letzten Jahrhundert, die sich in den Archiven finden, Relationene, Korrespondenzen, Aktenstücken der verschiedensten Art ...”

unveil the course of the universal development of humanity.⁴⁶⁵ Consequently, in comparison with the historians of the ancient and medieval past, modern and contemporary historians were more likely to succeed in these pursuits due to their accessibility to the archives and their practices of source criticism.

II: The historian's unavoidable conditions of subjectivity

Historians' criticism of archival sources certified their competency of reconstructing the authentic past and the objective revelation of historical truth. This critical practice of historiography demanded they maintain both temporal and spatial distance between their present and the studied past, and between the surrounding environment and the isolated archives. Yet, Ranke acknowledged that his reconstruction of an objective version of the German past unavoidably intersected with subjective political preferences, selective remembering and forgetting, and an imagined continuity of historical time.

As Ranke's career advanced in conjunction with the political movement of German nationalism, he constantly reminded himself not to overlook the instructive function that the historical discipline had contributed to the progress of universal humanity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ranke believed that historians were obligated to focus their investigations on understanding objective universal values, and to provide politicians with the historical guidance for carrying out a contemporary national agenda. However, because of historians' unavoidable personal sympathy towards their own national politics and culture, the notions of disciplinary neutrality were eventually

⁴⁶⁵ Gunter Berg, *Leopold von Ranke als akademischer Lehrer: Studien zu seinen Vorlesungen und seinen Geschichtsdarstellungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 189-190.

negated, especially as historians attempted to compile histories of their native lands. As Ranke argued, “[the national histories] are expressed sympathies and antipathies as inherited by tradition and affected by the antagonism of literary differences of opinion.”⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, the feasibility of a historian’s detachment from his inquiry into the “foreign past” depended upon his conscious subscription to the principle that Ranke propagated: “objectivity is at the same time impartiality.”⁴⁶⁷

A historian’s life experiences and political allegiances essentially shaped his professional pursuits. Ranke’s venture in searching for the historical origins of the German nation exemplified that without defending personal sympathy toward the fatherland, the compilation of national history was virtually unattainable. In a letter to the future king of Bavaria, Maximilian II, Ranke wrote, “I do not deny that I display a lively sympathy towards the event I describe — the rise of this state [the German nation] — but without such sympathy a book of this kind could not be written.”⁴⁶⁸ He also professed that

My sympathies always belong to the monarchy, which gives [German] culture a solid foundation, and independently gets involved with world affairs (*Weltangelegenheiten*). However, at the same time, I never belong to a particular and restricted form [of government].⁴⁶⁹

As a result, it was Ranke’s political favoritism toward the monarchy that made his story of making a unified *Kleindeutschland* meaningful and comprehensible.

⁴⁶⁶ Ranke, *A History of England*, vol. 1, xi.

⁴⁶⁷ Berg, *Leopold von Ranke als akademischer Lehrer*, 181.

⁴⁶⁸ Quote from Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 201.

⁴⁶⁹ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 613: “Meine Sympathien gehörten von jeher der Monarchie an, welche der Kultur eine sichere Grundlage giebt und in die Weltangelegenheiten selbständig eingreift. Aber einer bestimmt und eng begrenzten Form derselben gehörte ich doch niemals an.”

The imminent entanglement of professional objectivity and personal subjectivity fundamentally regulated the historian's deliberate adoption of the past in the nationalist historiography. Historians simply established a meaningful correlation between the events worthy of remembering and their development in the immediate future. When Ranke identified the Protestant Reformation as being the origin of the German national consciousness, he did not overlook its political implications for the subsequent evolution of German politics. In addition to focusing his historical investigation on Martin Luther, Ranke explicitly identified the reign and the political life of Frederick I Barbarossa as "the grandest and most imposing figure" of the epoch. As a result, he could introduce the fluctuating dynamics between the papacy and the princes of the German region as supplementing the development of the Reformation.⁴⁷⁰

Prioritizing historical events with a significant impact on subsequent phenomena had been primarily associated with Ranke's practice of establishing historical correlation.⁴⁷¹ The scope of a historian's objectivity was thereby limited to the significant events that could be historically correlated with his subject matter. Thus, historical significance could only be validated by adopting the perspective of the "future past," designed to establish a retrospectively meaningful correlation between past events and the historian's present and anticipated future. If historians selected and documented only significant events from their own perspective, their decisions would challenge the very foundation of historical objectivity, damaging their credibility in restoring the historical past with authenticity. For instance, in Ranke's examination of the relationship

⁴⁷⁰ Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, trans. Sarah Austin, ed. Robert A. Johnson (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1905), 17.

⁴⁷¹ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1, I: 109.

between the papacy and the German princes, he intentionally avoided the “elaborate description” of certain events, such as the propositions of the emperor and the Pope and numerous complaints of clergymen of 1479, as these events “were probably not so great as ... commonly imagined [in the present mind].”⁴⁷²

On the issue of the selection of subject matter, Ranke argued that historians’ present sociopolitical circumstances predominated their perceptions of the past. If certain events could be ignored, due to a historian’s selective narration, the notion of the authentic past could essentially be regarded as an imagined artifact. As a result, the historian’s professional duty was not as inflexible as the community of historical scholarship theoretically anticipated. In Ranke’s case, when he dealt with the War of the Polish Succession (1733-1738) in his *History of Prussia*, he did not disguise his excitement at being able to deploy historiographical forgetting to overlook the failure of the crown prince Frederick of Prussia and the Prince Eugene of Savoy to make any decisive attacks against the besieging French army on the Rhine. He wrote, “Happily we do not lie under the melancholy duty of describing the campaigns of 1734 and 1735.”⁴⁷³

The perspective of “future past” additionally governed how historians conceptualized the distinctive categories of time within the boundaries of the historical discipline. When Ranke recalled his interest in the Protestant Reformation and its role in the formation of modern Europe, as mentioned in chapter four, he essentially argued that historians needed a particular temporal stance in order to “scientifically” observe the development of historical events. This stance enabled historians to retrospectively

⁴⁷² Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, trans. Sarah Austin (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1844), 38.

⁴⁷³ Ranke, *Neun Bücher Preussischer Geschichte*, vol. 1, 384.

establish a historical correlation without breaking up preconceived dynamics between the future, the present, and the past. To construct a coherent discursive representation, historians needed to identify a temporal continuity. This notion of continuity would empower them to disclose elements of universal significance and future-looking benefits, and to stabilize the changing perceptions of historical actors (events or figures) in time.

To conceive this new set of temporal categories, Ranke strategically employed both therapeutic and historiographical forgetting to imagine a perfect distinction between personal subjectivity and professional objectivity. When Ranke visited archives in Venice for the first time in 1828, he could not conceal his excitement. In a letter to his brother, Ranke confessed that the enjoyment of the trip and his admiration for the city would eventually influence his objective observation and comprehension of the historical past of Venice. As a result, to undertake unbiased archival research, he needed to forget his current self and prepare to immerse himself into the historical grandeur of Venice. First, through implementing therapeutic forgetting, a more objective and detached self could overtake one's subjective attachment to the studied past. Second, when he deployed historiographical forgetting during the process of archival research, a temporal void emerged, enabling a neutral comprehension of the historical past.

When Ranke institutionalized the historical discipline, he candidly criticized previous historians for their failure to objectively recollect what happened in the past. To rectify this, historians were expected to “rediscover” and “reassign” meanings to the forgotten actors that previous historians had considered unimportant. However, the action of reassignment was critically motivated by historians' sympathetic, “future past” perspective toward the historical past. Namely, historians' pursuit of an authentic past

did not seek to restore the past with complete authenticity, but rather to imbue the past with meaning, whose transcendence was defined by current perceptions of historical time. To utilize history as an “unstable narrative” that offered solutions to understanding contemporary sociopolitical transformations, historians needed to constantly revise their definitions of historical significance and their historiographical practices to maintain historical objectivity.

III: The Rankean dualism in historiography: the interrelation between subjectivity and objectivity

Since his formative years, Ranke had been advocating a paradigm shift for the historical discipline, fundamentally based on historians’ need to rationalize and stabilize the relationship between their subjective and objective personae. Similar to his construction of a tripartite selfhood, Ranke conceptualized history as a scientific discipline, whose principles were founded on a historian’s ability to synthesize source-collection and to represent and interpret the past in binary terms between science and art, poetry and philosophy. Around 1816, Ranke suggested that, in addition to the scientific approach, when one simultaneously analyzed human perceptions with a transcendent unity of ideas, the subjective perceptions of meanings could be utilized as alternative means of acquiring knowledge or recognition of an object, including the historical past.⁴⁷⁴ This working synthesis of human rationality and intuition compelled Ranke to challenge the conventional practices of historical investigation in 1824. He thereby proposed a new

⁴⁷⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 144.

paradigm of historiography that intended to “reveal the past as it really is, notwithstanding the subjectivity of the historian.”⁴⁷⁵

Theoretically, Ranke aspired to implement a new set of methodologies that aimed to write history that “eliminate[d] any reference at all to the present.”⁴⁷⁶ Yet, Ranke also conceptualized the notion of historical significance and meaning based upon his preconceived comprehension of the present and anticipated future. As Leonard Krieger contends, “Ranke’s approach to history is a dualism, that is a combination of belief in a transcendent unity and passion for particular realities.”⁴⁷⁷ The practice of dualism was significantly exemplified by his nationalist historiography of Germany. Ranke’s “shift in the modes of subjectivity and objectivity mediated through the valid subjective sympathy” enabled him to effectively conform “the history of his own single nation” with “the authentic objectivity he increasingly found in universal history.”⁴⁷⁸ As a result, his projection of the nationalist agenda of the German past essentially coincided with the development of universal history, by which the formation of a unified German nation could be justified.

Ranke developed the dualist notion of history by dissecting the temporal relationship between the historian’s present and the studied past and by rationalizing the dynamic interplay between the historian’s subjectivity and disciplinary objectivity. In 1836, Ranke redefined the interdependency of temporalities, stating, “the knowledge of the past is incomplete without an acquaintance with the present; an understanding of the

⁴⁷⁵ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 123.

⁴⁷⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xx.

⁴⁷⁷ Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 159.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

present is impossible without knowledge of the past. ... One either cannot exist or is not complete without the other.”⁴⁷⁹ The purpose of the historical discipline was to acquire knowledge (*Kenntniß*) of the past, and to generate an understanding (*Verständniß*) about how we personally and collectively arrive at the present stage from the past. The pursuit of historical objectivity should not be merely conducted by a historian’s complete detachment of his present circumstances from the past. Rather, it demanded that historians envision a meaningful association between the past and the present, and generate a disinterested knowledge of the former and a perceivable understanding of the latter.

A historian’s ability to represent objective knowledge about the past as a discursive creation determined the authenticity of his construction. The acquisition of this knowledge was based upon the historian’s employment of both source criticism and context-sensitive analysis of archival documents, which were governed and endorsed by the institutional agents of the historical discipline. Yet, because the accessibility of archival sources was mostly under the jurisdiction of national institutions, access to and readings of historical documents were often determined and regulated by national ideologies. Therefore, when a historian anticipated discovering an uncharted segment of the national past, he essentially projected a new layer of time between the studied past and the present/future, so that he could compare the “momentary resemblance” between them. Historians then employed this resemblance to conceal the rupture of the chronological sequence, lending discursive representations of the past the illusion of seamlessness. Although this approach could be “misleading,” as Ranke contended, it

⁴⁷⁹ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 114.

paradoxically served as a “sure foothold” for legitimizing historians’ search for transcending meanings in their constructions of the authentic past.⁴⁸⁰

Ranke’s new disciplinary paradigm gave shape to a discursive representation of the studied past that sought to normalize the temporal relation between the studied past and the present. He synthesized two terminologies, *histoire* and *Geschichte*, in order to mediate temporal paradoxes in his new set of ideas that defined the modern historical discipline. Ranke argued that in theory “Only critically investigated history can be considered as history (*Geschichte*).”⁴⁸¹ Yet, the presentation of the studied past was indeed a subjective task. He explained,

History (*Geschichte*) is only the substantive [nominal term] (*das Substantiv*) of the past events (*Geschehen*): the past events must coincide completely with science (*Wissenschaft*). ... The word *Geschichte* emphasizes more on the objective aspect, and the word *histoire* presses more on the side of subjective relationship (*Beziehung*). Accordingly, the former raises the subject matter (or the fact, *die Sache*) to a science. [In the latter case] the science admits the subject matter (*Gegenstand*) into itself. They coincide each other or rather the great task consists in having them conform each other (*zusammenfallen*).⁴⁸²

Ranke thereby concluded that *Geschichte* could be used to describe a historian’s objective investigation of events that might have happened in the past; *histoire* became a “science” (*Wissenschaft*) where historian’s subjective and artistic representations of the past were subjected to and validated by the standards of history as an academic

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁸¹ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1, I: ix.

⁴⁸² Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 188: “Geschichte ist nur das Substantiv von Geschehen: das Geschehene und die Wissenschaft davon müssen ganz zusammenfallen. ... das Wort Geschichte drückt mehr die objektive, das Wort Historie mehr die subjektive Beziehung; dort erhebt sich die Sache zur Wissenschaft, hier nimmt die Wissenschaft den Gegenstand in sich auf: sie koinzidieren miteinander; oder vielmehr: es ist die große Aufgabe, daß sie zusammenfallen”; Ranke, “The Pitfalls of a Philosophy of History (Introduction to a lecture on universal history; a manuscript of the 1840s),” in his *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers (New York: Routledge, 2011), 19.

discipline.⁴⁸³ By proposing a synthesis of objective and artistic representation, Ranke was able to entertain a new paradigm of historical discipline, where science and art coincided and complimented each other.

Historians' acts of rediscovery essentially corresponded to their establishment of historical correlation between the forgotten past and their present perception of the studied past. Ranke argued, "The objectivity is the content [acquired] from [man's] subjective cognizance (*Wissen*)."⁴⁸⁴ When the authentic past was successfully restored, there would be no past without meaning. As a result, historians could conceivably attain "the knowledge of general historicity (*Kenntnis des allgemeinen Historischen*)" to legitimize their scholarly pursuit of historical objectivity.⁴⁸⁵

The completion of the ultimate goal of history demanded a new mode of representation that went beyond the chronological arrangement of facts, as previous histories had done. Indeed, as Ranke argued

if one only examines the factuality (*das Faktische*) according to the chronological order, one would suddenly feel that he is in another world, [where any] change could contribute to all elements of lives ... [because the assumption] was based upon the principle that the character of western nations would in fact affect the mind (*der Geist*) of diverse region.⁴⁸⁶

He contended that presenting history as chronicle operated on a false assumption of linear historical development, and would ultimately alienate historians from the events. While searching for the origins of historical writing, Ranke noticed that, prior to the form of

⁴⁸³ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 268.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 269: "Wenn man auch nur das Faktische in dem Vorüberzuge der Jahre betrachtet, so fühlt man plötzlich, daß man in einer ander Welt ist, eine Veränderung, zu der alle Elemente des Lebens beitragen ... von einem Prinzipie ausgeht, es ist vielmehr der Charakter der abendländischen Nationen, daß sich der Geist in den mannigfaltigsten Regionen bewegt."

annals or chronicles, the past had been presented either in the mode of collection of objective reports or in the mode of subjective interpretation of collected facts. Ranke thereby analyzed the ideal-typical mode of historical representation as a synthetic product of these two classic modes: the passionate work of source-criticism, such as Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, and the sympathetic comprehension of the past exemplified by Herodotus' *The Histories*.⁴⁸⁷

In Ranke's view, representing the studied past in its entirety was not the obligation of historians. Yet, although the subject matter and the presentation of the historical study could be selective and subjective, "Ranke was still convinced that the element of artistic imagination which enters into serious historical study did not prevent careful source criticism from yielding the data with which narratives that correspond to reality could be recreated."⁴⁸⁸ He argued that "the actual action (*das Faktische*)" of the past "cannot virtually be reproduced as a general idea by a historian"; but could be "understood and comprehensible" as "work of art" created by the "partially symbolic depiction" of the actions of the past.⁴⁸⁹ Ranke thus turned to philosophic idealism to coordinate his historiography with the synthetic framework of science, art, poetry, and philosophy. Therefore, historians could equally utilize scientific critique of sources and subjective intuition to comprehend the meaning of the selected past.

Ranke contended that philosophical understanding provided the past with transcendent meaning, which could only be depicted in an aesthetic manner. He wrote:

⁴⁸⁷ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 3, II: 42.

⁴⁸⁸ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 122.

⁴⁸⁹ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, 688.

Philosophy provides comprehension (*Einsicht*), and poetry provides representation (*Darstellung*).

[Therefore,] every true depiction of comprehension and that of philosophy must be poetic. ... Every depiction must present the spirituality (*Geistig*), so does the depiction of the nature, mankind and history. They must be absolute and completely ideal in order to present the comprehension, the philosophy and the idea. And this [mode of presentation] is the art.⁴⁹⁰

Accordingly, this mode of historical representation exemplifies historians' search for "beauty and form" and "the exact truth, whose expression required a free but rather complicated movement laid out by man [of the past] as a definite example before our eyes."⁴⁹¹ As Hayden White argues, Ranke "held that history is ultimately an art form, and specifically a classical art form," which "concerned with the representation of reality as it 'actually' appears in a given time and space."⁴⁹² Ranke's historiography essentially took the form of "the Comic emplotment," which called for "the Comedy of Duty and Obligation," and aimed to illustrate "the reassertion of the right of the collectivity over the individual who has risen up to challenge it as the definitive form of community."⁴⁹³ Notably, Ranke's campaign for the practice of synthesis, as Jörn Rüsen argues, demonstrated not only his attempt to introduce "reason into historiography with aesthetic quality," but also his resolution to establish a theoretical correspondence between

⁴⁹⁰ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 174: "Einsicht gibt den Philosophen; Darstellung den Poeten. Mithin muß jede wahre Darstellung der Einsicht, der Philosophie, Poesie sein. ... Jede Darstellung muß das Geistige darstellen; wie eben Natur, Menschengeschlecht, Geschichte. Sie muß durchaus und allemal ideal sein, die Einsicht, die Philosophie, die Idee darstellen. Und das ist die Kunst."

⁴⁹¹ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche, Neue Sammlung*, 97.

⁴⁹² Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 187.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 190.

Geschichte and *histoire* and ultimately to institutionalize the historical discipline through synthesizing scientific research with the artistic practice of writing.⁴⁹⁴

Ranke established institutional guidelines for future professional historians, suggesting that historical narrative did not require stylish embellishment, but merely reflected the narrator's authentic sympathy and *Weltanschauung*. He wrote:

One must virtually strip off his phraseology from the narrative. One must restore its core and content. ... The ultimate result is [to present] sympathy and cognizance (*Mitwisserschaft*) of everything.⁴⁹⁵

This task demanded that historians differentiate their studies of the human past from the study of the nature, and to consider their employment of intuitive subjectivity as indispensable as maintaining the status of "history as *Wissenschaft*." Ranke argued "the establishment of history (*Historie*) is the perception of lives, which is not allowed to be identified by a thought or a word; ... [the nature] fills its limits of existence with its presence; and its occurrence is all substantiated and is not accidental."⁴⁹⁶ Therefore, history was constituted by two interdependent components: representation and interpretation of the selected past. Ranke subsequently suggested, "history (*Geschichte*) begins with chronicle and ends with essay, where particular reminiscence (*Anklang*) can be found in the reflection of the historical events."⁴⁹⁷

Ranke's historiography exemplified how the science and art complimented each other and elevated the study of history to the platform of academic discipline. He

⁴⁹⁴ Jörn Rüsen, "Rhetoric and Aesthetics of History: Leopold von Ranke," *History and Theory* 29 (1990), 190-204.

⁴⁹⁵ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 240: "Man muß von der Erzählung gleichsam ihr Phraseologie abstreifen. Man muß sie auf ihren Kern und Inhalt zurückbringen. ... Das letzte Resultat ist Mitgefühl, Mitwisserschaft des Alls."

⁴⁹⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 89.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 412.

concluded that “science ascertains what has ever happened, [and] art shapes and directs the events currently before our eyes.”⁴⁹⁸ Therefore, “the goal of *Wissenschaft* is not to write books, but to recognize the spirit, which is the product of studies and sciences striving to produce religion, education and instruction at one’s own ambition.”⁴⁹⁹ This conception of history enabled Ranke to sustain disciplinary objectivity by utilizing history as a discursive and textual substitution for the authentic, yet absent, past. The existence of this previously neglected past was scientifically and authentically restored, and its particular significance was allocated through historian’s artistic representation of the specific historical event.

Nevertheless, Ranke imagined a harmonious synthesis of the historian’s subjectivity with an ideal of objectivity “out there” as the truth to be discovered, rather than constructed, in reality. Although the “way of proceeding from the critique of sources was scientific,” as Iggers notes, Ranke’s “reliance on intuition opened [him] to ideological distortions and introduced a political bias,” especially his recognition of “the conservative status quo as the outgrowth of historical forces.”⁵⁰⁰ In the construction of the authentic past, as Friedrich Nietzsche suggests, its characterization could only be dynamically and actively defined on an established and passive medium. Articulating the illusion of objectivity, he wrote:

We think of the aesthetic phenomenon of the detachment from all personal concern with which the painter sees the picture and forgets himself ... and we require the same artistic vision and absorption in his object from the historian. But it is only a superstition to say that the picture given to such a man by the object really shows the truth of things. Unless it be that objects are expected

⁴⁹⁸ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, 103.

⁴⁹⁹ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 129.

⁵⁰⁰ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 124 and 131.

in such moments to paint or photograph themselves by their own activity on a purely passive medium!⁵⁰¹

Ranke's faith in the transcendental and teleological spirits provided him with the medium for implementing the correlation of past and present, and the synthesis of sciences and arts. Accordingly, history as an "unstable narrative" institutionally legitimized the notion that "the present was a stage in a process of evolution in which the spirit characteristic of a particular people or nation came to realize itself."⁵⁰² When Ranke concluded his career as a professional historian, he recapitulated the objectives of the historical discipline, and reiterated that the study of history "[is] devote[d] to the past, and our sympathy [is devoted] to the present. Through the two, our hopes and wishes towards the future are justified."⁵⁰³ Consequently, Ranke's historiography not only redefined the interrelationship between time and space, but also, as Hans Kellner contends, meant "to make continuous what is discontinuous; it covers the gaps in time, in action, in documentation, even when it points to them."⁵⁰⁴

To establish a seamless correlation between temporal and spatial differences, with historical and scientific accuracy, Ranke encouraged historians to approach objectivity by utilizing a disengaged self through the voluntary employment of forgetting. The importance of being "forgotten about" and "dissociated from" the present, as Frank Ankersmit suggests, was institutionally decided upon by a corps of professional

⁵⁰¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Andrian Collus, rev. ed. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), 37.

⁵⁰² Herman Paul, "Who Suffered from the Crisis of Historicism? A Dutch Example," *History and Theory* 49 (2010), 173.

⁵⁰³ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche, Neue Sammlung*, 564.

⁵⁰⁴ Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 55.

historians.⁵⁰⁵ Ranke hence advocated that historians simply needed to recollect significant events, which had momentous effects on the future development of history. Events, however, were not simply “out there.” The allocation of meanings depended upon a peculiar sense of historical correlation and the collective anticipation of the future destiny of the nation, both of which were essentially constructed by the historian’s manipulation of collective memories and shared perceptions of the past. Therefore, Ranke’s historiographical practice aimed to create a realistic picture of the selected past. As Kellner further notes, this picture “would be realistic in a broadly synecdochic sense,” and deliberately ideological because it was “part of a willed Nietzschean ‘forgetting’ in order to release the ‘burden’ of humanity.”⁵⁰⁶ Namely, the historian’s rationalization of a fantasized reality essentially empowered his choice of model or moral act regarding how humans ought to live, which served conclusively as the founding principle of the modern historical discipline.

⁵⁰⁵ Frank Ankersmit, “The Sublime Dissociation of the Past: or How to Be(come) What One Is No Longer,” *History and Theory* 40 (2001), 319-320.

⁵⁰⁶ Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation*, 214-226.

CHAPTER 6 - The Making of the Historical Profession

Ranke's principal contributions to the historical discipline were his attempts to distinguish it from literary works in the form of *belle-lettres* and to professionalize it under the banner of objectivity. In addition to establishing rigorous methods for the criticism of documents, Ranke's dualistic and synthetic paradigm sought to stabilize the personal and scholarly aspects of the modern historical profession. His nationalist historiography was therefore constructed on a reciprocal relationship between historians' "objective" approach to historical subjects and a conservative intellectual's "subjective" conception of national identity. Hence, his conception of national history was formed by the struggles and conflicts among the newly established nation-states in modern Europe, and dictated by "thoughts of God" manifesting in the development of universal history.⁵⁰⁷

It was the precise duty of national historians to construct a "perfect memory" of the national past in its totality and to reconstruct an image of the "objective reality" of the studied past within the specific territories of nations and states. As Eric Hobsbawm contends, historians exercised their responsibilities to satisfy the needs of "imagined communities" not only by insisting on "the supremacy of evidence" and "the centrality of distinction between verifiable historical fact and fiction," but, more importantly, by "actual historical fabrication," in which historians employed the technique of anachronism to read "the desires of the present into the past."⁵⁰⁸ In the modern project of state-formation and nation-building, as Iggers and his disciples observe, "history writing

⁵⁰⁷ Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), 82.

⁵⁰⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: New Press, 1997), 273.

has played an instrumental role, which coincided with its own transition from a traditional form of learning to an academic discipline.”⁵⁰⁹ Accordingly, Ranke’s success in establishing a national historical profession resulted from his construction of a neutral temporal sphere for the national past and his compilation of a monumental national history regarding the making of a mnemonic German nation. As the development of nationalism, modern historiography and the professionalization of the discipline of history happened in tandem and needed to be seen as inseparable, the historical profession was essentially funded on the prospect of resolving the theoretical inconsistency regarding the maintenance of nationalist historiography as an objective science while advocating an extreme nationalist cause.

I: The creation of a neutral sphere for the national past

According to Ranke’s conception, historical objectivity rectified the inaccuracies of national histories in the past and created a neutral, open-access, temporal sphere for historians to disassociate themselves from their present in order to impartially access information of the past. Historians therefore maintained disciplinary neutrality on the basis of a dynamic temporal relation. As Leonard Krieger argues, in order to “avoid the subordination of the past to the present and future ... the historian’s objectivity toward the past and the permissibility of his own subjectivity toward the present and future” became indispensable in Ranke’s professionalization of historical discipline.⁵¹⁰

Forgetting played a critical role in the historian’s creation of a neutral sphere where he

⁵⁰⁹ Iggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, 351.

⁵¹⁰ Leonard Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 234-235.

could avoid temporal subordination and stabilize the dialectical tension between subjectivity and objectivity. Historians' objectivity was fundamentally feasible only when they could represent the authentic and meaningful past in terms of their subjective perception of the present and anticipated development of the future through the employment of forgetting and the selection of particular sets of factual information from the past.

To gain exclusive access to this neutral sphere of the past, historians required institutional authorization. Yet, at the same time, this authorization essentially restricted historians' autonomy to administer the restoration of an allegedly authentic past with complete neutrality. In Ranke's case, when he strived to secure any available institutional sponsorship for his first archival research in 1828, he constantly reminded himself and his potential sponsors about the scientific status of the historical discipline. He wrote,

... instead of depending upon political opinion, history is based on the investigation of facts.

Indeed, if [political] opinion succeeds in controlling the duty of history, all the freedom of sciences will be destroyed.⁵¹¹

Ranke acknowledged that to establish the historical discipline as a science, historians, like other scientists, should concentrate on investigating their subjects (read: historical facts) impartially and avoid any intervention from political opinions.

In Ranke's estimation, only professionally trained historians would be able to accomplish the critical objectives of the historical discipline. He suggested that, with proper training, professional historians would be able to "see" the historical past in

⁵¹¹ Leopold von Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 53-54: *Zur eigenen Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Alfred Dove (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890), 197: "... statt ihre politische Meinung auf Histoire, das ist Erforschung der Tatsachen zu gründen, vielmehr die Geschichte durch die Meinung beherrschen; ein Unternehmen, welches alles Freiheit der Wissenschaft vernichten würde, wenn es gelänge."

unique ways. In his inaugural address of professorship at the University of Berlin, he wrote, “with the help of already trained eyes you can fully see which turn mankind took in each age, what it aimed for, what it acquired and what it truly gained.”⁵¹² Evidently, Ranke conceptualized the idea of historical objectivity from a universalist view of the historical development of mankind, while simultaneously focusing his investigations on the characteristics of individuality as they evolved over time. As a result, the historian’s neutrality did not intend to dispassionately present what actually happened, but to sympathetically show how the crucial turns, aims, achievements and acquisitions drew prevalent impacts and impressions on the development of universal humanity.

Applying this notion of neutrality to the project of compiling a state-centric history of nation-building, Ranke’s pursuit of historical objectivity began with archival research and ended with a nationalist discourse of history that paralleled the trans-national development of the Eurocentric universe. To tailor his methodology exclusively for the German past, Ranke argued that his practice of source criticism was “the special merit of German historical research, which, in accordance with the genius of the nation, strive[d] to grasp the history of all other peoples with the same exactness and thoroughness with which it would grasp its own.”⁵¹³ He assumed that by corresponding the justification of similar national characteristics with the universal development of all nations, he could neutralize the subjectivity of a national history anchored on the pillar of nationalism. He also stated that objectivity of national history was feasible only when historians transformed archives into a neutral sphere where all the participating national historians

⁵¹² Quote from Theodore Laue, *Leopold von Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), 41.

⁵¹³ Ranke, “Appendix,” in his *A History of England Principally in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. unknown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), vol. 5, 428.

could cross-examine their own perceptions of national pasts with the histories of all other nations, and recognize the inclusive universal spirits embedded in the exclusive narratives of national pasts. Although Ranke had considered his methodology to be a genuine German product, the critical examination of archival sources was essentially designed to overcome his ineffectiveness at compiling either a total history of a foreign land, such as his *History of England*, or an impartial history of his own native land, such as his *History of the Reformation in Germany*.

Historians' abilities to evaluate the reliability and accuracy of documents, upon which their comprehension of the authentic past depended, essentially determined the degree of objectivity historians could reach. The aspiration to compile a national history was to search for the origins of the nation, not the origins of human society. Ranke contended that historians could not initiate their investigation of certain pasts where there was no historical documentation or monument available. He then concluded that the comprehension of historical monuments or memorials could only be made when dependable written records were present. Once historians authenticated the sources, the sphere of influence of the historical discipline would be boundless.

Ranke did not forget to highlight the historian's role in the institutional process of authenticating factual documents for future researchers. In addition to representing the historical past as it essentially happened, it was the historians' job to reproduce state papers for future inquiries. Historians not only studied the documents prepared by previous historians, but also manufactured institutional records to be deposited in the neutral sphere (the archives) for the convenience of future historians. Evidently, the status of the objectivity of the historical discipline was under scrutiny. Ranke mitigated

potential disagreement once more by proposing another synthesis between the arts and sciences. He wrote, “The need of reproduction [of state papers] is an artistic element in the historical science, and can be characterized as the same need as the rest of positive sciences.”⁵¹⁴

The reciprocal relationship between historians and the institutional management of archives needed further examination, because the similarities between the artistic components and intentions to be favorably objective could be noticed in both historians’ production of archival sources for the present and compilation of histories of the national past. Ranke, as mentioned in chapter two, admitted that the institution-granted access of archives decisively contributed to his professional advancement in the historical enterprise. This success in the historical profession further prepared him for his appointment as official historiographer of Prussia and as one of the founding members of a state-sponsored historical society, which granted him the exclusive authority to reproduce documents. As a result, by the age of sixty-three, Ranke had simultaneously been a consumer and a producer of historical objectivity.

Ranke strived to maintain a professional stance in instituting history as a scientific discipline. When King Maximilian II of Bavaria appointed him as chairman of the Historical Commission within the Bavarian Academy of Sciences in 1858, Ranke responded with a positive statement, which stated that history as a *Wissenschaft* could sustain itself as an independent discipline free from any human intervention. He explained:

⁵¹⁴ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, eds. Volker Dotterweich and Walther Peter Fuchs (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1975), 103.

The ideal historical education (*historischer Bildung*) would rest upon [the notion] that the subject itself is merely the organ to the object. Namely, without [passing] through the natural or accidental barriers that inhibit the humanly existence (*Daseins*), the science itself can make the complete truth to be recognized and represented.⁵¹⁵

Correspondingly, any historian who conducted his or her inquiries in accordance with scientific (*wissenschaftlich*) standards would be able to construct a neutral sphere for the studied past, where the truth could objectively manifest itself without being contested by subjective human factors. Therefore, the historian's execution of the disciplinary objectivity depended upon his or her ability to reconstruct the past reality as the ultimate creation of the historical enterprise.

Ranke's conception of history as a *Wissenschaft* was based on his confidence in the historian's ability to dismiss the inevitable intervention of human subjectivity while conducting objective research. In notes taken in a lecture that Ranke delivered during the semester of 1834 and 1835, Ranke's disciple Georg Waitz transcribed,

... history ... is the science of human beings in their past. ... It is a fair duty for historians to broaden individual's knowledge with the viewpoint of the whole.⁵¹⁶

Ranke challenged his students to investigate history from a world-historical perspective in order to elucidate the sublime relationship between the historical individuality and the general development of universal humanity in its totality. This practice simultaneously coincided with Ranke's construction of a tripartite selfhood, where an individual reflected his or her self-identification in the manifestation of universal humanity. As a result,

⁵¹⁵ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. Walter Peter Fuchs (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 432: "Das Ideal historischer Bildung würde darin liegen, daß Subjekt sich rein zum Organ des Objekts, nämlich der Wissenschaft selbst machen könnte, ohne durch die natürlichen oder zufälligen Schranken des menschlichen Daseins daran gehindert zu werden, die volle Wahrheit zu erkennen und darzustellen."

⁵¹⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 120: "... die Historie ist ... die Wissenschaft vom Menschengeschlechte in seiner Vergangenheit. ... Von allen Seiten erweitert sich die Kenntnis des Einzelnen, damit die Anschauung des Ganzen; das ist die schöne Aufgabe des Historikers."

historical objectivity was delivered by the historian's discursive construction of a neutral reality of the national past. The construction was as much a scientific product as it was a fantasy that was rationally grounded on a dynamic communal relationship among a historian's self, nation and universe.

The assessment of the historian's fulfillment of disciplinary objectivity depended upon his ability to reconstruct an image that could completely mirror past reality. Ranke emphasized the importance of the proper training through seminars and archival research to ensure the exclusive authority and the objectivity of the historical profession. He proclaimed that only professionally trained historians could experience the idea of objectivity ingrained in the field of history. He argued,

Without the assumption of objectivity [in mind], true impartiality is the riped fruit of historically cultivated minds (*historisch-gebildeten Geistes*). For, concurrently, history has already come with a very serious intention, which presupposes to look at ... the ethical sense (*sittliche Gefühl*) and rational proposition (*vernünftige Absicht*) of human beings.⁵¹⁷

It illustrated Ranke's ambition not only to warrant the restricted accessibility of the authentic past within the professional community of historians, but also to furnish the historical discipline with a pragmatic objective that could be universally applied beyond the disciplinary boundaries of all sciences. This exclusive experience of objectivity in history, as Johan Huizinga suggested, granted trained historians "the conviction of being in a direct and completely authentic contact with the past."⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁷ Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 51-52: *Abhandlungen und Versuche, Neue Sammlung*, eds. Alfred Dove and Theodor Wiedemann (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1888), 127: "Keine Anschauung des Objektiven, wahre Unparteilichkeit ist die reiste Frucht des historisch-gebildeten Geistes. Für gleichzeitige Geschichte gehört schon ein sehr ernster Wille dazu ... sittliche Gefühle und vernünftige Absichten bei ihnen vorauszusetzen."

⁵¹⁸ Quote from Frank R. Ankersmit, "Representation as the Representation of Experience," *Metaphilosophy* 31 (2000), 159.

It was this exact confidence in the realistic acquaintance with the past that accredited historians' qualifications for the creation of a persuasive image of the past. As Hans Kellner argues, the history produced by a trained historian could "be described as discourse that is fundamentally rhetorical, and that representing the past takes place through the creation of powerful, persuasive images which can be best understood as created objects, models, metaphor or proposals about reality."⁵¹⁹ As a result, by instructively systematizing the professional procedures to construct the persuasive image of the studied past, Ranke was able to institutionalize history as an academic discipline.

The institutional establishment of a persuasive discourse was measured by historians' interactions with the scholarly community and the general political climate. In his early undertaking of the historical enterprise, Ranke considered that four-fifths of his "luck" derived from the availability and reliability of archival sources, upon which his discursive construction of authentic image of the studied past was based, while the remaining fifth actually came from the scholarly community.⁵²⁰ Although Ranke did not specifically articulate how the community of historians assisted his career advancement, Thomas Kuhn suggests in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* members of the historical discipline acted very much like a scientific community in their efforts to establish history as a "normal science." In Ranke's case, the historical community practiced its trade with a set of received beliefs in the pursuit of the authentic past through the rigorous training and practice of source criticism. Thus, the historical

⁵¹⁹ Hans Kellner, "Introduction," in *A New Philosophy of History*, eds. Ankersmit and Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2.

⁵²⁰ Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, 139.

discipline as *Wissenschaft* fundamentally proliferated like a normal science, much as other sciences did, in the nineteenth century.⁵²¹

Historians' depiction of the authentic past demanded a delicate cooperation between historians and politicians, although there were recognizable differences between their respective subject matters. In an 1885 letter to Prince Otto von Bismarck, Ranke argued that despite the fact that politicians dealt with the present world and historians with the past, objectivity would essentially emerge from the continual interaction between present politics and history in the past, through the relentless understanding of the two.⁵²² Theoretically, both politician and historian were obligated to understand political conditions either in the present or the past. However, as mentioned earlier, when the notion of objectivity was no longer absolute, it was merely a reflection of neutrality in the historian's actively engaged dialogue between the past and the present. As a result, historical objectivity was tentatively characterized on the basis of Ranke's ideal temporal relationship of the "future past." As Ranke explained,

The event must be treated for itself as an entirety with present and future, because every past was once present, and our present has a future [in the foresight]. — Additionally, events occurred not merely for the future, but also for its present. And [they occurred] often without impact, and yet are worthy [of being documented] in history.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Iggers, "The Crisis of the Rankean Paradigm in the Nineteenth Century," in *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, eds. Iggers and Jame M. Powell (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 170-179.

⁵²² Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, eds. H. Bernhard Hoelt and Hans Herzfeld (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1949), 732.

⁵²³ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 140: "Die Ereignisse müssen für sich sowohl als im Zusammenhang mit Vergangenheit und Zukunft betrachtet werden; denn jede Vergangenheit war einmal Gegenwart und unsere Gegenwart hat ein Zukunft. — Die Ereignisse geschehen auch nicht bloß für die Zukunft, sondern für ihre Gegenwart, und sind oft ohne Wirkung und dennoch der Geschichte würdig."

Therefore, as an impartial producer of historical documents for the future, historian needed to deploy a sympathetic and reciprocal understanding towards the present and the past in order to record events inclusively and authentically without showing any judgment, upon which the formation of a neutral sphere of the past was based.

In addition to the temporal trajectory of meanings in the historical discourse, historians' pursuit of relative objectivity also depended upon their ability to approach the study of certain past events as a detached subject, much like the geographical examination of a foreign country. By comparing these two practices, Ranke contended that, although writing history was "two times harder" than describing a foreign nation, both shared similar challenges in the practice of impartiality. He stated that "the deviation (*die Abweichung*) of the described world can be identical to our perceptions of the temporal distance (*der Entfernung*) of a century," and the application of "the living reference originated from the present moment can lead to partisan favoritism and prejudice."⁵²⁴ In addition to treating the studied past as a foreign country, he suggested that, "the true history" is merely "to see, to inquiry and to report what you perceive."⁵²⁵ Notably, the goal of the historical discipline is not only to conduct objective "research and representation," but also to "instruct," because "general history spreads itself out like a spacious landscape before us over which man has to traverse in order to see it in its entirety and particularity."⁵²⁶ This statement nonetheless implies that there is a divide or

⁵²⁴ Ranke, *Die serbische Revolution. Aus serbischen Papieren und Mittheilungen* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1829), v-vi.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 4: *Vorlesungseinleitungen*, 303.

gap between the past and the present, and, by design, that the historical discipline is supposed to bridge and to map the landscape with a comprehensive image of reality.⁵²⁷

Consequently, the demonstration of objectivity in the historian's construction of a persuasive image of the past was determined by his ability to navigate and investigate the sphere of the past beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries on the landscape of history. As Ranke concluded, "the truth is never bleak (isolate, *trostlos*). The general consensus ... is the truth."⁵²⁸ Namely, if both a historian's imagery of the past and his revelation of the truth hidden in the neutral sphere of the past sought for recognition from a general and collective readership, the institutional establishment of the historical profession found its *raison d'être* in governing the constitution of the public consensus toward a collective national past in the age of nationalism.

II: History as a national monument: the construction of a mnemonic nation

Ranke's depiction of a persuasive image of the authentic past was a discursive creation of a personal search for historical "truth" from the professional perspective of the allegedly "objective reality" of past. He constituted this image by deliberately selecting (forgetting) and arranging materials originated from the professionally accredited neutral sphere of historical past. His purpose was to transform the grand narrative into a historical monument or a site for the collective commemoration of the

⁵²⁷ Erlend Røge, "The Aim of Interpretation is to Create Perplexity in the Face of the Real: Hayden White in Conversation with Erlend Røge," *History and Theory* 48 (2009), 64. White's general assumption of history evidently applies to Ranke's modes of conceptualizing history as a discipline.

⁵²⁸ Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 1: *Tagebücher*, eds. Walther Peter Fuchs and Theodor Schieder (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1964), 156.

national past, where all the information of the past was “authentically” and “neutrally” deposited and ready to be retrieved or recollected when needed.

Ranke differentiated the historical inquiries of the past from memories of the past. He argued that historian’s re-visitation of the historical past was both an authentic reflection of documented memories of the past, and a discursive reconstruction of a rational perception toward the meaningful past. He wrote, “History rests not solely on memory, as some believe, but above all on critical understanding.”⁵²⁹ In addition to the employment of source criticism, Ranke acknowledged that the aesthetic element of historical discourse could further refine historian’s obligations to amend the exiting inaccurate deceptions and to prevent the public from being oblivious. It also could be utilized as a constant reminder of the nature of ambiguity regarding man’s comprehension of the past preserved in memories or archival sources or documented in historical narratives. Ranke argued that,

History is based wholly on literature. Its task consists in *renewing* our vision of the way, in which events have occurred and human nature behaved, and in *preserving* the memory of them of all time (emphasis added).⁵³⁰

Because human perception of the past was in a constant state of change, it required consistent modification to rationally accommodate individual or institutional needs. Ranke thereby suggested that history ought to be considered an unstable discourse in order to capture the inconsistencies in human commemorations of the past. Historians accomplished the duties of rectification and the preservation of memories by persistently

⁵²⁹ Ranke, *The Secret of World History: Selected Writings on the Art and Science of History*, trans. and ed. Roger Wines (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981), 109.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

regenerating persuasive images of the past as the only effective discursive remedy to prevent people from forgetting about the “meaningful” past.

As Ranke concluded his career with the ultimate work of world history, he optimistically identified the callings of the historical profession as equivalent to the official responsibilities of the *mnemon* in ancient Greece. He strived to transform history into an academic discipline that received exclusive institutional authorization to instruct people how and what to remember. Ranke constantly reminded himself that the historian’s pivotal duty was to “commemorate” (*erinnern*) the significant past. He explained,

A historian can withdraw his attention from the actual divinity. He simply has to investigate the ideas regarding the force (*Macht*), from which the general movement originates and controls its current, and to commemorate the facts (*die Tatsache*), which have manifested themselves.⁵³¹

Ranke, on the one hand, recognized the distinctive attribute of development in his conception of history, which provoked historians to comprehend the universal tendencies that dominated the development of the universe through the factual representation of historical events. On the other hand, he suggested that historians’ construction of persuasive images of the past should be considered as their reminiscent call for remembering (not forgetting about) their selected past that comprised the self-manifesting importance in the general development of universal humanity. The final discursive product of historical investigation, as Ranke persistently advocated, could operate as “an

⁵³¹ Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, eds. Alfred Dove, Theodor Wiedermann and Goerg Winter (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1883-1888), vol. 3, I: 166: “Der Historiker kann von dem eigentlich Religiösen abstrahieren; er hat nur die Ideen zu efforschen, welche durch ihre Macht die allgemeinen Bewegungen veranlassen und ihre Strömung beherrschen, und an die Thatsachen zu erinnern, in denen sie sich manifestirt haben.”

imperishable monument” because “what the historian writes reflects the spirit of the epoch, namely his political point of view.”⁵³²

The transformation of history into a historical monument provided the public with a site of imagination where they could conveniently access the “raw” documents or memories and independently recollect and commemorate a certain past free from prejudice. In doing so, as Keith Windschuttle argues, “the social role that history performs is to generate what [Greg] Denning calls ‘cultural literacy,’” which is the “knowledge of the past that sustains the values of the present.”⁵³³ Ranke’s doctrine of historical objectivity was fundamentally measured by historians’ faithful reflection of their own subjective viewpoints representing the spirit of his time. Specifically, while promoting a unified German nation during the age of nationalism, Ranke had been striving to cast the German state as the lead actor of history in order to tell the Germans they could have collectively “made it” to “the final step in civilization.”⁵³⁴

With this political agenda in mind, Ranke devoted himself to the institutional establishment of a new and contemporary paradigm to recollect and narrate the national histories for the modern nation-states in Europe. He assumed that, unlike European history before the emergence of nationalism, the formation of modern European nations in the universal history “flow[ed] more deeply, [and] more fully,” and required historians to employ different perspectives to “draw other powers into history that include the

⁵³² Ibid., 268.

⁵³³ Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists Are Murdering Our Past* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 1996), 78.

⁵³⁴ Tom Martin, *Green History: The Future of the Past* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 83.

whole life of the people” and to “comprehend history as a unity (*Einheit*).”⁵³⁵ Therefore, to compile a national history of Germany that had never been represented and interpreted as a political unity, Ranke practically sought all the available formulae of historical writing that could assist him to accomplish these objectives. Ultimately, he synthesized them into an operative application that merely concentrated on telling the story about how the German region overcame its diversity and was able to unify as a nation-state. As a result, he composed a nationalist historiography of Germany to propagate a collective sense of German identity and a popular awareness of the German national mission within the grand scheme of the development of universal humanity. It legitimized the Prussian monarchy as an institutional apparatus to stabilize the fluid memory politics of the German past, present and the expected future. It also portrayed the monarch as the only effective victorious actor in the power struggles and conflicts among the European nations since the sixteenth century.

In addition to providing the imagined past with an ideological legitimacy for the political leadership of the Prussian monarchy, Ranke’s historical career exemplified how history operated as an active apparatus in both personal and institutional procedures of becoming national. Ranke once professed, “It is ... the duty of the historian to accompany the progress of events until what was undertaken is carried out to its accomplishment.”⁵³⁶ The historical profession was fundamentally integral to the project of nation-building. Ranke’s grand narrative of German history was designated to imbue historical temporalities with coherency, to depict the German region with the necessary

⁵³⁵ Ranke, *The Secret of World History*, 164; Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, vol. 2: *Über die Epochen der Neueren Geschichte: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, eds. Theodoe Schieder and Helmut Berdings (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1971), 82.

⁵³⁶ Ranke, *A History of England*, vol. 5, 309.

illusion of political and culture unity,⁵³⁷ to facilitate the personal construction of tripartite selfhood and the communal formation of a collective national identity, and to frame the unified nation-state of Germany as the universal justification. Accordingly, the master narrative of the collective past provided answers to the problem of personal oblivion, restored the sense of national dignity, and offered the possibility of fraternity.⁵³⁸

In conclusion, the making of the historical profession was not merely a proposition for institutionalizing a new disciplinary standard of methods of research and training. It was also a project of “identity formation” in which historical narratives “connected past, present and future in such a way as to offer identity in historical terms.”⁵³⁹ There were constant historical trajectories embedded in Ranke’s historical works. His historical narrative was constituted by a convincing discourse about “how the national idea [of Germany] had unfolded itself over time” and how its goal “was supposed to culminate.”⁵⁴⁰ Ranke’s establishment of the historical profession could be understood as both a personal and an institutional project for understanding identities in historical form. As a result, the instability of multi-fold transformations of identities could be counteracted with grand narratives of history, which, by design, intended to direct individual, group and state action in a compelling fashion.

⁵³⁷ Rogne, “The Aim of Interpretation Is to Create Perplexity in The Face of The Real,” *History and Theory* 48 (2009), 71.

⁵³⁸ Ulf Hannerz, “The Withering Away of the Nation?” in *The Global History Reader*, eds. Bruce Mazlish and Akira Iriye (New York: Routledge, 2005), 211.

⁵³⁹ Herman Paul, “Who Suffered from The Crisis of Historicism? A Dutch Example,” *History and Theory* 49 (2010), 172.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

CONCLUSION

In the nascent development of modern historiography, Ranke's career exemplified a momentous shift in the historical discipline from universal and regional history to a concentration on the nation and nation-states. The increasing dependency of historical scholarship on archival sources made seemingly improbable any attempts to understand transnational history. Yet the interplay of Ranke's construction of a tripartite selfhood and the pursuit of professional scholarship prompted him to institutionalize a mode of historiography that viewed states as manifestations of historical reason and focused on the nation-state as the motor of universal humanity and progress, so that he could attentively stabilize the multifold personal and sociopolitical transformations of nineteenth-century Europe.

Professional historians are expected to define the relations between 'private' and 'public' memories of the past. Ranke established an ideal-typical historical profession based upon an incoherent but idealistically justifiable conception of historical objectivity. His historiographical map of the landscape of a shared past or public memory substantiate the inevitable intersection of becoming historical and becoming national in the politics of identity of modern Europe, especially in Germany. It was this dual mission that made Ranke's conception of the historical discipline and the establishment of the historical profession the dominating paradigm of modern historiography.

With the obligation of providing "reliable" sources of the national past, Ranke's nationalist historiography was deemed to be nationalist in several ways. First, as mentioned in chapter three, it was intended to be institutionally utilized as the

displacement (or replacement) of narratives of the national past in accordance with the presumption that the national consciousness of domestic inclusion could be constructed within the coherent borders of ethno-cultural nation and political state. Second, while transcending national and ethnic lines, Rankean historiography also provoked an intimate sense of temporalities. Therefore, the historical correlation of the past and the present/future, as discussed in chapter four, could be used as the foundational principle to cultivate the national identity, and as a means to rationalize historians' subjective adoption of a nation- or state-centric teleology to interpret the parallel evolution of national and universal histories. Last, by articulating the rationale of historical agency and subjectivity, as defined in chapter five, nationalist historiography, which was founded on the presumption of an awareness of the other, prompted Ranke to exercise an exclusive definition of the nationalized self. Paradoxically, the execution of the nationalist elements of selfhood often challenged the theoretical principles of first two characterizations of Ranke's nationalist historiography.

Ranke anchored his ideal-typical disciplinary conception of historical objectivity on a universalistic platform of synthesis. This synthetic action represented Ranke's solution to the predicament of incompatibility between propagating a Prussocentric identity of Germany and incubating a corps of professional historians, such as Johann Gustav Droysen, who later formed the so-called "Prussian School." Although the normative operation of becoming historical and national was essentially performed on the world-historical pillar of the nationalism of the Eurocentric universe, with the strategic employment of therapeutic and historiographical forgetting, Ranke strived to accomplish a tripartite unison of the formations of modern self, modern historiography, and the

development of German nationalism, which comprised the essence of his professional career in historical scholarship. The fulfillment of these aforementioned components nonetheless demanded particular executions of a dualist synthesis either between art and science, or between new republicanism and old monarchism, and the tasks of stabilizing the dynamics of individuality, communal nationality and universal humanity, or in the methodological advancement of recollecting, representing and interpreting the reminiscences of the human past.

Ranke's commitment to studying the collective national life and spirit of the human past also provided a theoretical distinction of subject matters between the historical discipline and other fields of study. The well-defined disciplinary boundaries of research content and methodologies enabled Ranke to establish a paradigm of historiography and to institutionalize history as an academic discipline. Yet, the new historical profession was at the same time intensely nationalistic and inclined to concentrate on politics at the state level. When the Rankean school of historicism progressively proliferated as the dominating disciplinary and institutional practice in the communities of professional historians and public intellectuals by the end of the nineteenth century, some Neo-Rankean historians, such as Max Lenz and Erich Marcks, not only continued the political tradition of the Prussian school, but also extended Ranke's concept of the competition of European powers to the world scene of expansion of imperialism. Not only did the German exportation of the Rankean paradigm increasingly dominate the global development of modern historiography, but the imperialist ambition to expand historians' contesting roles beyond the disciplinary

boundaries and the contents of historical discourses unsurprisingly induced the so-called “Crisis of Historicism.”

When Europe was permeated with a culture of uncertainty during the *fin de siècle*, Ranke’s disciples were unable to sustain the structural integrity of the Rankean tripartite unison in both private and public domains. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the exposure of the flaws and instabilities of Ranke’s paradigm primarily concerned with the state and that depended on static dichotomies induced other scientific disciplines to challenge and question the theoretical basis of historians’ temporal relation with their research subjects. In response, Ranke’s pupils tentatively divided the school into two disciplinary campaigns of historiography exemplified by either Friedrich Meinecke’s notion of the consistency of cultural individuality (*Kulturindividualitäten*) in history or Benedetto Croce’s insistence that history as history is contemporary.⁵⁴¹ Although the relativism of Ranke’s historiography was critically publicized during the Crisis, it did create conditions of opportunity for the further reexamination of Ranke’s preliminary constructive views of nation-building and nationalist historiography, which eventually ushered in the contemporary debates about nationalism initiated by Hans Kohn.

Nevertheless, if the professional historians were aware of the importance of source-based accounts, they would also realize that imagination would inevitably enter their historical narration where the sources were inadequate. While recognizing the function of myth as a buttress in the national and other collective identities, the reexamination of Ernest Renan’s anticipated dichotomy between the construction of the modern nation and the advancement of historical scholarship inspired the historians of the

⁵⁴¹ Robert A. Pois, “Two Poles Within Historicism: Croce and Meinecke,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 31 (1970), 253-272.

“linguistic turn” or the “cultural turn” to admit that, although the elements of imagination were not perfectly objective, they “were guided by the documentary ‘voice of the past’ to reconstruct and understand the past better.”⁵⁴² This increasing skepticism regarding the possibility of objective knowledge in the study of the past compelled the same group of historians to seek myth-breaking as the new gesture that aimed to advocate another paradigm shift in the modern historiography.

Ironically, Ranke also experienced the similar skepticism in the nineteenth century, which prompted him to paradigmatically establish history as an academic discipline. In Ranke’s case, he alleviated this skeptical criticism by formulating a working synthesis of history between the founding epistemological myths and the methodologies of academic disciplines, where he dismissed all the potential dualist dichotomies regarding the unreliability of human recollection of the past through strategic employment of forgetting and remembering. Ranke’s nationalist historiography exemplified that studying the national past could not only instruct the citizens how to commit themselves to the collective fulfillment of national interests in the present and future. It also propagated a new distinction between healthy forgetting/remembering and hypermnesia/amnesia, in which the objective knowledge, or the perfect memory, of the national past could be attained and represented in normative and scientific ways.

Although recent postmodernist and deconstructionist critiques of historical writing profoundly question the centrality of the nation-state, nation-states not only survive but continue to dominate the master narratives of history. In the new nation-states of Europe that have emerged since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the post-colonial and

⁵⁴² Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), 301.

decolonized nations of non-Western world, national histories/myths are actively being constructed and written as the political means to bolster national self-esteem and to justify national resistance to globalization. Even in the western world, although the buzzwords of regional cooperation and integration have increasingly replaced the ideology of nation-state since the formation of European Union, histories are still being written and taught in schools in the module of nation-states. If writing national history continues its role in the service of national politics, the Rankean paradigm of nationalist historiography will continue its role in the shaping of global development of historical scholarship. Its abiding significance has indisputably been and will continue to be attested to by the persistent occurrences of the Rankean Renaissance wherever and whenever there is a need for reconstructing (rejuvenating) the cultural memory or revising history for a specific national and political entity.

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