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**Introductory Remarks**

The linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity – which I will refer to as cultural pluralism – is generally considered to be the outstanding feature of the Habsburg Empire. According to the last official census of 1910 the total population of the Monarchy amounted to 51.39 million. The German nationality was the largest, representing about one fourth (23.9%), followed by the Magyars who made up about one fifth of the whole population (20.2%), followed by the smaller numbers of Czechs (12.6%), Poles (10.0%), Ruthenians (7.9%), Rumanians (6.4%), Croats (5.3%), Slovaks (3.8%), Serbs (3.8%), Slovenes (2.6%), Italians (2.0%) and Serbo-Croatian Muslims (1.2%).

Kakania’s pluralism is a standard motif of the literature in the last fifty years of the Empire. Again and again it is claimed that in order to fully comprehend the Habsburg Monarchy one has to have climbed on top of the snow-capped Alps of Tyrol, picking edelweiss, watching eagles fly and talking to the solitary mountaineers; from there, passing Trento with its monument to Dante and Bozen with its German equivalent – the monument to Walther von der Vogelweide –, one would go to maritime Trieste, the “Austrian Lung at the Adriatic Sea”, a commercial centre and a bridge between the North and the South; then embarking on a ship, travelling down the coast to Ragusa, with its southern climate and its cypresses, one would visit Bosnia-Herzegovina with its oriental traditions, then heading north through Serbia on to Hungary where aristocratic landholders in alliance with the Church ruled over an ethnically diverse peasantry belonging to the so-called “nations without history”, then up the Danube to Budapest, to Vienna, the thriving capital with its avant-garde culture, then to Bohemia, visiting the Hradschin of Prague, to Moravia, on to Cracow, the old Galician capital with its famous Wawel, and finally travelling across the Sarmatian plain, encountering the Yiddish speaking Jews and the Greek Orthodox Ruthenian peasants of Bukovina, the Empire’s “Far and Wild East”, once called “Semi-Asia”. And still, it is claimed, at the end of this long journey one would have seen only parts of the whole.
Structure and Main Argument

In the first part of my paper I will juxtapose two ideal-type interpretations of Kakania’s cultural pluralism: the idea of a fundamental unity-within-diversity versus the idea of a fundamental diversity-within-unity. These two interpretations have to be understood as the poles of a continuum. In the second part I will argue that the ideal-type psychology of the intellectual who was critical of the idea of a fundamental unity-within-diversity and sensitive to the overarching importance of irreducible cultural differences resembles Georg Simmel’s portrayal of the stranger. In the last part I will refer to four outstanding Kakanian social scientists and provide some evidence for my thesis.

PART 1: Two Ideal-Type Interpretations of Kakania’s Pluralism

The first interpretation of Kakanian pluralism – unity-within-diversity – is universalistic, looking at the similarities, the second – diversity-within-unity – is relativistic, emphasizing variety and segregation. The first interpretation highlights the centripetal forces drawing the elements together, the second the centrifugal forces impeding their coming together. The first interpretation is centralist, viewing proximity as being the cause of a melting of the heterogeneous elements, the second is federalist or irredentistic, viewing proximity as being the cause of a strengthening of the existing differences. The first interpretation is urban, emphasizing Gesellschaft, society, change, and innovation, the second is rural, emphasizing Gemeinschaft, community, stability, and tradition. The first interpretation is tied to the intellectual tradition of the enlightenment, the second to the tradition of the romantic movement. Moreover, the second interpretation views Kakania’s unity as a superficial phenomenon, a thin brittle layer barely covering up the Empire’s heterogeneous nature.

A further difference between the two ideas concerns the level of analysis. The adherents of the idea of unity either argue on a microscopic level regarding the common characteristics of the individuals as more important than their respective group membership, or they argue on a macroscopic level and consider the binding forces between the groups such as a common past, religion or a common dynasty as more important than the groups’ differences. Hence the unity can be established and the groups’ differences undermined either by focussing on the level below or the level above the group. Those arguing for the pre-eminence of diversity usually concentrate on the mesoscopic level. Its history makes each group unique. The individual is seen as being completely absorbed by his or her group. Not historical necessity but an oppressive ruling class holds the groups together. A greater whole than the group does not exist. The groups have nothing in common besides their desire to be separated from each other.

The idea of a fundamental unity-within-diversity closely corresponded to the Empire’s official historiography of a harmonious cohabitation of its peoples and was, hence, often used to legitimise state-policy.³ The idea was illustrated by the
image depicting the Empire as a bright colourful garden of nationalities, a “Völkergarten”. Each flower respectively each nationality was being praised for its own beauty. But the garden as a whole was imagined as being even more stunning because of the harmonious assortment of its diverse elements. The idea of unity found its everyday expression on the Austrian banknotes. On one side we find the currency denoted in the two main languages German and Hungarian, on the other side all the other official languages are listed. The idea of a fundamental diversity-within-unity found its ideological expression in the image of the multi-national Monarchy being a peoples’ dungeon, a “Völkerkerker”.

PART 2: The Ideal-Type Psychology of the Kakanian Intellectual Accentuating Diversity

Interestingly, the question which of the two interpretations an intellectual supported did not, at least not primarily, depend upon his or her political world-view. We find strong supporters and critics of both ideas among liberals, conservatives, and progressives. Not the political world-view, but the intellectual’s identification with the mainstream German-speaking culture is the formative factor determining his theoretical stance on pluralism. A heightened ethnographic sensibility, it seems, is an attitude fostered predominantly at the periphery of the Empire. Fundamental differences were accentuated by those intellectuals who, because of their own linguistic, religious, or ethnic background, did not become naturalized as “full” members of the dominant culture. Not “belonging” to the mainstream culture but at the same time learning to understand its language, values and modes of thinking these intellectuals often lived in different cultural milieux, constantly moving across linguistic, ethnic and religious boundaries. Their own marginality combined with a high level of mobility lead them to view social life from different perspectives. In their works these intellectuals pointed to the importance of roots and differences. In their practical lives they often felt culturally homeless. Constantly switching perspectives uproots. This ideal-type psychology of the Kakanian intellectual bears many resemblances to Georg Simmel’s portrayal of the stranger, the wanderer who stays and at the same time moves freely between different groups, without becoming an “organic” part of any of them. The stranger finds himself in a position of close distance to his social surroundings. According to Simmel this combination of separation and proximity enables the stranger to observe the world from a variety of perspectives and to acquire a high level of objectivity.
PART 3: Case Studies: Some Remarks on the Lives and Works of Outstanding Kakanian Scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences

In the last part of my paper I will support my thesis by presenting four case studies of Kakanian intellectuals. Ludwig Gumplowicz, one of the founding fathers of German-speaking sociology, especially of the school of conflict-sociology, was born in 1838 in the Jewish ghetto of Cracow. His mother tongue was Polish. After taking his degree in law and a short and disappointing career as a journalist and politician he left Galicia, moved to Graz and became an academic. In Graz he felt alienated from the majority of his German-speaking colleagues and remained a stranger for more than 30 years. At the centre of his sociology lies a radical critique of the idea, popular at his time, that the society or the state can be viewed as a biological organism. The state was founded by violent conquest. To Gumplowicz the idea of a common weal binding together the various parts of society is simply fictitious. Society is an aggregate of groups continuously struggling against each other since times immemorial. Each group feels superior and attempts to exploit the other groups. To denote this attitude Gumplowicz introduced the term “ethnocentrism”. The means by which the groups fight each other may change, they may become more subtle, but the struggle will never cease. This eternal struggle between society’s various groups was the most important natural law of social life. For his conception of society’s inner life Gumplowicz coined the term “groupism” (“Gruppismus”). His sociology – as he repeatedly stated himself – was based upon his close personal observations of the national struggles in the Habsburg Monarchy. The idea of an eternal struggle between groups is related to his view that the individual is completely determined by his or her social group. Gumplowicz rejects the liberal-atomistic conception of society as being composed of largely independent individuals. The man without qualities is an illusion. A man’s quality is his group – and groups are everything, Gumplowicz would say.

Another interesting intellectual is Eugen Ehrlich (1862-1922). One of the founders of the sociology of law, Ehrlich was born in 1862 in Czernowitz, the capital of Bukovina, the poorest region of the Habsburg Empire. Ehrlich was Jewish, later converted to Catholicism, his mother tongue was Polish. At the core of Ehrlich’s thinking lies a radical critique of traditional jurisprudence for only studying the dead law laid down in learned books. Introducing the concept of “living law” Ehrlich, who taught at the University of Czernowitz, showed how crucially legal customs, such as those regulating marriage or inheritance, differed among the various ethnic groups in Bukovina and how widely they all deviated from the official Austrian legal code. To empirically investigate this legal pluralism he developed a sociological questionnaire. One just had to scratch a little at the surface of the Austrian legal code to discover a wealth of legal traditions beneath. Regarding jurisprudence Ehrlich would have substituted the
notion of “E pluribus unum”, “One-Out-Of-Many” by the notion of “Ex uno plura”, “Many-Out-Of-One”.

The work of Bronislaw Malinowski is also interesting in the context of Kakanian pluralism. Malinowski, son of a Slavic dialectologist, was born in Cracow in 1884. When the Great War broke out, Malinowski was in Australia. Being an Austrian subject he was an ally’s enemy and hence taken prisoner of war. He was, however, given permission to undertake his fieldwork among the ‘natives’ of the Trobriand Islands, the study that established his reputation as one of the world’s leading anthropologists. He described himself as a “wandering Pole”, “a migratory bird”. Being a cosmopolitan with a strong sense for the importance of “roots”, of Gemeinschaft, he embodied – as Gellner convincingly argued – the Habsburg dilemma. In the 1930s when the question of colonialism was being discussed in England Malinowski who took pride in belonging to the Polish nobility called upon his own Kakanian history. Describing himself as a member of an oppressed minority Malinowski opposed any fusion with the conquerors. He argued “for segregation in terms of full cultural autonomy”. We, so Malinowski, simply wanted “to have […] the same right of decision as regards our destiny, our civilization, and our mode of enjoying life.” Diversity matters. Writing to an African intellectual Malinowski stated that he rejected the “missionary spirit, […] the tendency to make people all in one mould […]. As an anthropologist I am interested in other races and cultures and am convinced that they have an intrinsic value […], hence I do not want the African to disappear under a European varnish, but to develop his own qualities by his own initiative”. For a long time the study of anthropology was pervaded by a nostalgic and antiquarian spirit. Many anthropologists dreaded uniformity and monotony which they saw as the main characteristics of the modern world. When Malinowski visited the United States in the 1920s he wrote in a letter: “I have the feeling that I have seen face to face a dreadful Entity which is gradually going to conquer the world and level it down to a meaningless, jolly, jovial banality”. Anthropology, he once said, offered him the opportunity for a romantic escape from the highly standardized civilization. Anthropology is an intellectual reaction to the fear of the “One World” in which all differences would vanish. This fear is felt especially by intellectuals moving from the periphery to the centre, from tradition to modernity. Through their writings anthropologists try to rescue these differences from oblivion. They are not only the students, but also the saviours of cultural pluralism. Malinowski’s interest was the pure “native”. He once spoke of the “right Indians”, “those Indians who oppose Christianity, Americanism and the other filthy things which exist in this culture”. Malinowski’s search for original purity is a symptom of his fear of the “One World”. Out of his writings the world emerges as a colourful mosaic of self-contained, timeless little worlds.
The last intellectual I want to draw your attention to is Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), born in Budapest in 1893, one of the major exponents of the epistemological enterprise known as sociology of knowledge (“Wissenssoziologie”). Mannheim was the son of a German-Jewish mother and a Hungarian-Jewish father. As an educated member of the Jewish middle-class Mannheim was equally distant from all the main societal forces: the Church, the aristocracy, the emerging urban labour-class, and the oppressed peasant minorities in the countryside. He was himself part of what he called the social stratum of “free-floating-intellectuals”. Mannheim considered the traditional conception of ideology, which he called the “particular conception of ideology”, as too narrow because it only regarded some assertions of an adversary as ideological. According to Mannheim’s “total conception of ideology” there was no non-ideological thought. A group’s entire system of thought had to be viewed as ideological. In this context Mannheim coined the term of the existential determination of human knowledge (“Seinsverbundenheit”). Just as language is not the product of an individual’s mind, knowledge is not created by the mind of a single individual. Instead of saying that an individual thinks, it is more accurate to say that an individual partakes in the thoughts of his or her group. Not only economic, but political, social, cultural, even generational factors determine an individual’s knowledge. With his emphasis upon the difficulty of communication between the various groups Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge echoes the centrifugal forces of Kakania’s cultural pluralism.

Concluding Remarks

Let me summarize my main argument. I first contrasted two ideal-type interpretations of Kakania’s cultural pluralism. I then sketched the psychology of those intellectuals who adhered to the more relativistic pattern. I concluded with four case-studies of outstanding Kakanian intellectuals to support my thesis. Thank you very much for your attention.

1 Paper delivered at the conference “The Contours of Legitimacy in Central Europe: New Approaches in Graduate Studies”, 24-26 May 2002, European Studies Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford, United Kingdom; Panel 4A: “Cosmopolitan Sensibilities in the Late Habsburg Empire” on Saturday, 25 May, 9:00-10:30, in the Dahrendorf Room, Founders' Building; Chair: Professor Richard Crampton, St. Edmund Hall, University of Oxford.

2 Cf. Robert KANN, The multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918, Vol. II: Empire Reform, New York 1950, 299-307. The census of 1910 included Bosnia-Herzegovina. After 1867 official statistics were published separately by the Austrian and Hungarian government. Statistical data on the entire Empire is hence based on calculations from secondary sources and should be used with caution. Two problems deserve to be mentioned. In the census of 1910 there was no
explicit category “nationality”. The individuals were asked which language they spoke and which confession they belonged to. In Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Hungary an individual’s language was his mother-tongue, whereas in Cisleithania the language of an individual was the language he or she used in daily intercourse (“Umgangssprache”). The concept of nationality therefore was slightly different in Hungary, Bosnia and Cisleithania. The problem is further complicated by the fact that not all languages spoken in the Empire were recognized as national languages (“landesübliche Sprachen”) in the terms of Art. XIX of the Constitutional Law of 1867 (RGBl. No. 142). Hence Yiddish-speaking Jews had to choose among one of the officially recognized languages. In Galicia they predominantly chose Polish, in Bukovina German. Problems related to the computing of national statistics in the Habsburg Monarchy are discussed in Peter URBANITSCH, “Erläuterungen zur Sprachen- bzw. Nationalitätenkarte der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie” (separate booklet), in: Adam WANDRUSZKA, Peter URBANITSCH (ed.), Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918, Vol. III, Die Völker des Reiches, 2. Teilband, Wien 1980.

3 For an example of the official historiography of Habsburg’s cultural pluralism cf. Freiherr Carl von CZOERNIG, Ethnographie der österreichischen Monarchie, 3 Vol., Wien 1855-1857; cf. also the 24 volumes of the work initially edited by Crown Prince RUDOLF: Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild (“Kronprinzenwerk”), Wien 1885-1902. Grillparzer’s poem on Radetzky is probably the most famous lyrical manifestation of the ideology of harmonious cohabitation.

4 In another image the Empire is represented as a great concert in which the different peoples take the role of different voices or instruments. Again the sound of each instrument, of each voice is regarded as beautiful. More beautiful, however, than the individual melodies is the resulting harmony of the whole orchestra.

5 One way to escape from this no-man’s-land was to “adopt” the supranational identity of the Habsburg Empire. This psychological mechanism seems to be one explanation why many Jews “became the supranational people of the multi-national state” and often passionately supported the Monarchy; cf. Carl E. SCHORSKE, Fin-de-siècle Vienna, Politics and Culture, New York 1981 (1961), 129.


Beginn der soziologischen Konflikttheorie im Österreich der Jahrhundertwende, in: Britta
RUPP-EISENREICH, Justin STAGL (ed.), Kulturwissenschaften im Vielvölkerstaat: Zur
Geschichte der Ethnologie und verwandter Gebiete in Österreich, ca. 1780-1918 (=
Ethnologica Austriaca 1, ed. by J. Stagl), Wien-Köln-Weimar 1995, 170-207. Recently
Peter Stachel, looking at the multicultural context of Central Europe, has contributed a
penetrating analysis of the origins of Austrian sociology; cf. Peter STACHEL, Die
Anfänge der österreichischen Soziologie als Ausdruck der Multikulturalität Zentraleuropas, in: Karl
ACHAM, Geschichte der österreichischen Humanwissenschaften, Vol. 3.1: Menschliches Verhalten

For Gumplowicz’ academic career and his isolation in Graz cf. Bernd WEILER, Die
akademische Karriere von Ludwig Gumplowicz in Graz: Materialien zur Habilitation und
Ernennung zum Extraordinarius (1876-1882), in: Archiv für die Geschichte der Soziologie in
Österreich / Archive for the History of Sociology in Austria, Newsletter 21, 2001, 319; B.
WEILER, Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909) und sein begabtester Schüler: Der Triestiner
Franco Savorgnan (1879-1963), Archiv für die Geschichte der Soziologie in Österreich / Archive
für die History of Sociology in Austria, Newsletter 22, 2001, 26-50.

Ehrlich’s shorter writings have been collected and edited by Manfred Rehbinder,
EUGEN EHRlich, Recht und Leben: Gesammelte Schriften zur Rechtstatsachenforschung und
zur Freirechtslehre, ed. by Manfred Rehbinder, Berlin 1967, E. EHRlich, Gesetz und lebendes Recht: Vermischte kleinere Schriften, ed. by
Manfred Rehbinder, Berlin 1986; cf. also E. EHRlich, The National Problems in
Austria, (paper delivered at the International Congress for the Study of the Principles of a
Durable Peace, Berne 1916), The Hague 1917; for a discussion of Ehrlich’s ideas cf.
Manfred REHBINDER, Die Begründung der Rechtssoziologie durch Eugen Ehrlich,
Berlin 1986 (2nd ed.); Heinz ZIPPRIAN, Eugen Ehrlich und die Bukowina: Die
Entstehung der Rechtssoziologie aus der kulturellen Vielfalt menschlicher Verbände, in:
Csaba KISS, Endre KISS, Justin STAGL (ed.), Nation und Nationalismus in
wissenschaftlichen Standardwerken Österreich-Ungarns, ca. 1867-1918 (= Ethnologica

Cf. Eugen EHRlich, Das lebende Recht der Völker der Bukowina (1912), in: E
EHRlich, Recht und Leben: Gesammelte Schriften zur Rechtstatsachenforschung und
zur Freirechtslehre, ed. by Manfred Rehbinder, Berlin 1967, 43-60, 43: “In the dukedom
Bukovina there presently live [...] nine nationalities: Armenians, Germans, Jews,
Romanians, Russians (Lipovans), Ruthenians, Slovacs [...], Hungarians, Gipsies. A
traditional jurisprudent would no doubt claim that all these nationalities had only one,
namely exactly the same Austrian legal code [...]. And still one glimpse could convince
him that each of these nationalities observes completely different legal rules in every
legal situation of everyday life. In fact the ancient rule of the personality in law still holds
true, only having been replaced on paper [...] by the rule of territoriality.” My translation.
(„Es leben im Herzogtum Bukowina gegenwärtig, zum Teil sogar noch immer ganz
friedlich nebeneinander, neun Volksstämme: Armenier, Deutsche, Juden, Rumänien,
Russen (Lipovanien), Ruthenier, Slowaken (die oft zu den Polen gezählt werden), Ungarn,
Zigeuner. Ein Jurist der hergebrachten Richtung würde zweifellos behaupten, alle diese
Völker hätten nur ein einziges, und zwar genau dasselbe, das in ganz Österreich geltende
österreichische Recht. Und doch könnte ihn schon ein flüchtiger Blick davon überzeugen,
daß jeder dieser Stämme in allen Rechtsverhältnissen des täglichen Lebens ganz andere Rechtsregeln beobachtet. Der alte Grundsatz der Personalität im Rechte wirkt daher tatsächlich weiter fort, nur auf dem Papier längst durch den Grundsatz der Territorialität ersetzt.


12 Bronislaw MALINOWSKI, Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea, London 1987 (1922). Gellner argues that Malinowski’s interest in ethnography might have been stimulated by his frequent visits to Zakopane in the Tatra-mountains where he encountered the old traditions of the Polish Górale; cf. E. GELLNER, Language and Solitude, 132.


14 Malinowski-File, Malinowski to S.O. Logemoh Esq., April 24 1931, General Correspondence, Letters L, London School of Economics, BLPS. I am indebted to the European Social Science Information Research Facility (EUSSIRF) for a grant enabling me to study the Malinowski-collection at the London School of Economics in spring 2000. I want to thank the staff at the manuscript archives at the LSE for their kind help.


17 For a discussion of the influence of this “fear of a vanishing of differences” on anthropological and sociological orientations in the multi-national Empire cf. Bernd

18 Malinowski-File, Malinowski to Robert Aitken, July 22 1926, General Correspondence, Letters A, BLPES.


20 The term was first used by the German sociologist Alfred Weber.

21 In this epistemological endeavour Mannheim was preceded among others by Wilhelm Jerusalem (1854-1923). Wilhelm Jerusalem was born into a Jewish-Bohemian family in 1854. He grew up to become a rabbi, then changed his mind, went to university, began to teach at a grammar school in Moravia, and later at the University of Vienna. Jerusalem’s biography and theoretical outlook shows interesting parallels to the intellectuals presented in this paper; cf. Wilhelm JERUSALEM, Gedanken und Denker, Gesammelte Aufsätze, Neue Folge, Wien and Leipzig 1925.