



*La asimilación de la filosofía de  
K. Ch. F. Krause en España*

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## Resumen

Este artículo está dedicado a identificar las líneas generales de recepción y asimilación de la filosofía de K. Ch. F. Krause en España durante el siglo XIX. En términos generales, los objetivos de este trabajo son: sintetizar parte de estas cuestiones sobre la penetración de la filosofía krausista de la religión y el derecho en España y explicar su afinidad filosófica y espiritual con la sensibilidad tradicional de la cultura religiosa española; establecer un vínculo con sus evidentes coincidencias con la recepción del pensamiento jurídico de Hegel; ponerlas en correlación con cuestiones sociales e intelectuales que también dificultaron o facilitaron el anclaje de la filosofía krausista en España. Finalmente, plantaremos algunas hipótesis sobre sus méritos como filosofía práctica que aspiran a ser útiles para orientar y explicar esta preferencia generalizada por Krause en la realidad sociopolítica española.

*Palabras clave:* Filosofía, Derecho, Religión, España, Krause.

## Abstract

This paper is devoted to identifying the general lines of reception and assimilation of the philosophy of K. Ch. F. Krause in Spain during the nineteenth-century. In general terms, the aims of this paper are: to synthesise part of these questions on the penetration of Krause's philosophy of religion and law in Spain and explain its reception conditions in Spanish religious culture; to establish a link to its obvious coincidences with the reception of Hegel's legal thinking; to put them in correlation with social and intellectual issues that also hampered or facilitated the anchoring of Krausian philosophy in Spain. Finally, we will put forward some hypotheses on its merits as a practical philosophy that aspire to be useful for orientating and explaining this generalised preference for Krause in the Spanish socio-political reality.

*Keywords:* Philosophy, Law, Religion, Spain, Krause.

## I. Introduction

The topic that we will discuss requires a very brief introduction to the Krause's philosophy for those unfamiliar with this doctrine, which is now widely spread in Europe and Latin America and that has its well-known source in the German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832). Given the strong European influence on the origin of Krausism, with the introduction in Spain of the modernising influences of Europe through the travels of Sanz del Río to Germany, we think it interesting to address a certain thesis proliferated in Spanish Krausism on the understanding of this philosophy as a European movement with pretensions to universality, in order to see its projection on global education and the legal recognition of human rights (Ureña, 1991).

The foundation of the movement known as Spanish Krausism had its origin in the exportation of Krause's works to Spain made by Julian Sanz del Río. The Krausist doctrine had a powerful influence on Spanish history, politics, education and literature in the late nineteenth century and beyond. Among the followers of this school of thought were Gumersindo de Azcárate, Leopoldo Alas Clarín, Adolfo Posada and particularly Francisco Giner de los Ríos, founder and director of the Free Institution of Education, which was founded in 1876 by personalities involved in education, cultural and social reforms who defended academic freedom and refused to adjust their teaching to the official dogma in religion, political or moral issues. This forced them to continue their educational work outside the state universities, through the creation of a private educational institution: the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILE).

This paper is devoted to identifying the general lines of reception and assimilation of the philosophy of Krause in Spain during the nineteenth-century. Its goal is to critically examine some of the reasons –historical, religious, sociological and philosophical reasons– that explain why Krause's philosophy of religion and philosophy of law were embraced as preferable to the Hegelian ones.

The first thing that is worth stressing is that the receptions of their respective doctrines had their own characters because –as we will try to show– neither Krausism nor Hegelianism were particles of a single process. Each one had its own problems. For this reason, we will dedicate this study to delimiting their points of contact and their notable differences.

Essentially, there is a friction between the traditionalists and neo-scholastics *against* the liberal and reforming theses of Krausism and Hegelianism, and these points of collision can be summarised in two fronts. Firstly, the religious obstacles, that is, the religious immune system of the Spanish culture of the 19th, inhospitable to accepting a Hegelian critique of religion. Secondly, the legal and political obstacles, derived from the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of law, in particular of his conception of the State. In fact there could also be a third front that refers to the Hispanic ideological and sociocultural reality, which transversally crosses the aforementioned two planes. This framework of analysis presents the objective reasons and crucial limits that impeded a hypothetical triumph of Hegel in Spain.

Particularly, we will focus on two decisively sharp edges in the diffusion of Krausism and Hegelianism in Spain: their theories of the State and the question of religion because we consider that here is where we can find *in nuce* reasons that better explain the inclinations of the Spanish bourgeoisie towards Krause.

## II. An attempt to reconcile the dogmas of the Catholic religion with liberalism

Krausism, unlike other philosophies of German idealism, managed to penetrate deep into Spanish society and propose profound changes in Spanish education and customs. By adopting a theoretical form that did not expressly identify them with heterodoxy and that was more accessible to all mentalities, Spanish Krausists gradually became more and more influential in their political and social outreach.

Certainly, this conciliatory positioning of harmonic Krausian rationalism with religion posed a philosophy not only open to religion but largely based on it, establishing possibilities of connection with a particular Spanish cultural background and a traditionally religious past. There is even a lot of analyses that have sought the causes of the preference for Krause in Spain in the linking of Krausism with the Spanish mysticism of the 16th century (Rivacoba, 1963, pp. 19-20).

Thus, although the Krausist natural law was far from the scholastic one, they shared certain fundamental ideas that allowed us to more easily bring together those historical precedents with the German philosophy of Krause –something that would not be possible with Hegel's philosophy (Almoguera, 2017, p. 229-252).

As Gustavo Bueno Sánchez states, “the curious thing is that, from the perspective of Cardinal González, while Hegelianism and materialist positivism led to an atheism with which there was no longer any dialogue in terms of Christian philosophy, Krausism had more of a *family resemblance*, because after all, the Krausist spiritualism left a door open to doctrinal understanding” (Bueno, 1999, p.

59). That *'family resemblance'* could have been decisive for Krausism's acceptance and influence in very heterogeneous forums. As Valeriano Orden expresses, the "symbiosis between faith and reason is for Krause, as later for his disciples, one of the specific merits of his system, which is distinguished not only from other philosophical positions, but also from other systems of idealism, like Hegel's," (Orden, 1999, 246) and this undoubtedly contributed to its dissemination.

An Spanish philosopher, Menéndez Pelayo, noting this remarkable influence, wanted to see in it a kind of *'Krausist trick'*, because he see that this conciliatory discourse was concealing the danger of an incipient atheism. The root of that dangerous confusion that according to Don Marcelino could *'dazzle the unwary'* with *the nebulous Krausist hypocrisy* –this are Marcelino's words– and with the supposed opacity of the Krausist discourse whose subtleties mean to disguise the alarming nature of some of its ideas and pave the way to surreptitiously introducing its philosophy in Spain.

Regarding the subject of religion, it should be noted that personal tensions with religion, were not consequences exclusive to the Krausists, nor something specific to Hegelianism –rather, the rejection of both Krausian and Hegelian doctrines by their traditional interpreters is a product of their general reaction against the Enlightened rationalism of German idealism as a whole (Vázquez-Romero, 1998).

Their traditional detractors accused them of maintaining an erroneous and anti-Christian concept of morality, of divinity and of the social order. Krausism and Hegelianism were portrayed as enemy doctrines of the Catholic religion. For example, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo called the Krausists "atheists in disguise" (1978, p. 475), and said that Hegelianism had been born 'almost dead' in the school of Seville due to its weak roots and its meagre predicament in Madrid. He felt that Hegelianism presented insurmountable differences with Catholicism. We find a good example in the case of Antonio María Fabié, a 'Catholic Hegelian' (which for Don Marcelino was a complete oxymoron), Marcelino wrote: "Mr. Fabié has repeatedly declared himself Catholic, despite being Hegelian, however this conciliation offers serious difficulties, because the heterodoxy of Hegelianism is radically incompatible with the personality of the divine being [...] In this way I imagine that Mr. Fabié, whose Catholicism I have never doubted, could be Hegelian; that is, *throwing Hegel into the water and staying with Jesus Christ*" (Menéndez, 1978, p. 355).

We begin to see sufficient basis to think that, had there been a flourishing of Hegelianism in Spain –equal in depth and breadth to that of Krausism–, it would have met the same opponents among the traditional ranks of Spanish thought that assailed Krausism and that, to reprise the metaphor, they would have thrown both Hegel and Krause into the water.

We would even dare to venture the high probability that the criticisms against Hegelianism would have reached a greater magnitude, with a tone even more sharp, energetic and tense than that mobilised against Krausism, since Hegelianism occupied a more problematic space among the traditional Spanish sectors, who did not see the way to make compatible Hegel with the Gospels.

Notwithstanding the notable differences and the great controversies that took place between Krausists and Catholics, it is true that the Spanish Krausists paid great attention to the legal internationalism of our sixteenth-century theologians, and that certain common traits of ethics in their natural law theories would raise some harmonising criteria between both. Besides, Giner de los Ríos himself describes how the strong religious criticism that came from Hegelianism was substantially different from the one that they wanted to incorporate with Krausism in Spain:

No matter what anybody says, neither Schelling, nor Hegel, nor Stahl, nor Savigny could correct this twisted and secular direction; since law and freedom for them, as for Kant, come to be equivalent. [...] Upon closer inspection, the emptiness of their results began to be felt: a steely criticism, [posed by the Krausists and] directed by principles that it was not yet able to realise, traced new paths [...] [the Krausists] have cooperated from very different points of view to this new construction, all bringing some essential element to the restoration of the ethical spirit in the science of law, a spirit whose full and thorough sense perhaps Krause alone has shown in its intimate unity (Giner, 1921, pp. 162-164).

This insistence on moralising the individualist State of classical liberalism to propose a more human and social liberalism was part of the criticism that the Krausists aimed at the positivism that was beginning to spread throughout Europe –and that in Spain had its maximum representation in liberal doctrinarism and the abstract legal formalism of the Restoration. These criticisms were thus intended to denounce the lamentable phenomenon of the corruption of political life engendered by the neglected state in which the study of fundamental ethical questions has been left. That moralising eagerness somehow managed to reunite apparently contrary forces in the same boat: thus, for example, the Krausists along with the supporters of the Historical School and neo-Thomist thinking had in common a high concern for the moralisation of Spanish society (Puy, 1998, p. 232).

Although, naturally, from the different metaphysics on which both doctrines were based, different conceptions of morality ineluctably arose. It was evident that for all these Krausian doctrines the urgency to recover certain moral values related to the family, associationism, education or civic virtues was pressing.

In this way, Krause and its legacy of Spanish Krausism brought to scholastic philosophy a means of communication –attempts to reconcile the dogmas of the

Catholic religion with liberalism, an aspect perhaps not so present in Hegelianism. It posed a peaceful way of progress and respect for the current order, rejecting any violent means of reform, even without renouncing an incorruptible defence of the right to religious freedom –a freedom they did not understand in the sense of free will (or as an indifferent and neutral power without essential content, which for Krause would be the ‘shadow of freedom’)–, but rather as a concept of law and freedom that would not be too far from the ‘well-ordered community’ that outlined the legal methodology of the Hispanic classics of the School of Natural Law, of which Francisco Suárez is one of the most prominent representatives.<sup>1</sup>

However, we must not forget that such conciliatory theoretical efforts had little success in practice. Krause’s book *Das Urbild der Menschheit*<sup>2</sup> was condemned ‘after the promulgation of the *Syllabus* by Pius XI’ and included in the *Index* of ‘Prohibited Books’ in 1865 (Abellán, 1984, p. 421).

A similar fate of censorship befell the Spanish Krausists who had to develop their projects of reform and progress in an adverse environment of ideological and political persecution: from the ‘first university question’ in 1867 that suspended teachers who mentioned “doctrines erroneous or pernicious in the religious, moral or political order” –that is, those doctrines that were of a democratic nature or did not follow the principles defended at the time by Catholicism. This ended with the disciplinary action and expulsion of Julián Sanz del Río, Nicolás Salmerón and Fernando de Castro from their chairs at the University, and with the later departure of Giner de los Ríos out of solidarity with his colleagues.

The Krausist Gumersindo de Azcárate explained it clearly, after being expelled from his university chair for his religious positions, in that ode to the tolerance that is his book: *Minuta de un testament* (Azcárate, 2017) in which he states that the intransigence of the Church and the fundamentalists produced an uneasiness and a moral wound that made him abandon the effort to propose a ‘liberal Catholicism’ compatible with modern civilisation.

Such a conciliatory commitment, like any modernising effort in those times so heated with the secularising tendencies of German ideology, would be frustrated in the clash with the scale of values that ruled our cultural and social panorama, in which aspects like the binomials progress-order and religion-freedom seemed truly incompatible.

The manifest political and religious persecution of Krause’s work and of Spanish Krausists was meant to disqualify and stigmatise the doctrine with spurious perso-

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<sup>1</sup> About this effort to reconcile reason and the mystical see: (Sánchez Cámara, 2020) and (Manzanero, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> To directly consult the original text of this important book of Krause, we refer to the critical edition recently published in German (Krause, 2018).

nal attacks, more than to ponder its scientific value. It would not be odd to think that it was precisely because of the great relevance and political-social impact that Krause had in our milieu as one of the fundamental references of Spanish modernisation, that it faced traditionalist obstacles of this nature and extent. Perhaps its obvious value to the Spanish liberal culture, its potency as a group with organisational capacity and its promotion of a philosophy that connected very well with the reality of the Spanish bourgeoisie triggered the adverse reactions and circumstances Krausists faced and the political and social ramifications. We will now examine some of those.

### III. The social theory of Krause and its application to the Spanish socio-political reality

As stated before, the barriers to Krausism and Hegelianism taking root in Spain were not only religious ones. His theory of the State and the very nature of his philosophy –with huge implications for politics and educational practice– made Hegel’s interpretation much more controversial than the Krausian one. In particular, his statist solutions posed serious difficulties for his legal philosophy to be lodged in the Spain of the second half of the nineteenth century.

The marked distinction between the Hegelian theory of the State and the Krausist criticism of the centralising model of the State may well give us one of the most clearly contrasted and best-differentiated aspects, of greater political and social implications, between Hegelianism and Spanish Krausism; that piece of the Krausian system that offers us the best way to explain the choice of Julián Sanz del Río, father of Spanish Krausism, of that philosophy over Hegel’s contemporary statist interpretations.

Undoubtedly, the anti-statist character sustained by the majority of Hispanic intellectuals, conditioned its influence and relegated the Hegelian unitarian philosophy of the State that did not find the support of a bourgeois or political movement with the objective of unifying the State. As Lacasta expresses, “our Hegelians do not participate –at all– in such an anti-centralist way of seeing things. They are all unitarians. It is not surprising that with this historical teleology, the Catholic Monarchs seem to our Hegelians a true milestone in our history. Because *Los Reyes Católicos* are the ‘unifiers’ *par excellence*” (Lacasta, 1984, p. 279).

The fact is that this centralism, as a form of political organisation, provoked a generalised reaction of rejection among the mostly centrifugal movements of Spanish nineteenth-century society, which was against a legal philosophy that, like Hegel’s, gave the State an excessive role, to the detriment of the individual or civil society.



Thus, for example, Giner picks up the famous quotation of Hegel, where he affirms that “[t]he personality of the state is actual only as one person, the monarch ... he has only to say ‘yes’, and dot the ‘I’...the ‘*I will*’”. According to Giner, “in Hegel [the king] represents the ‘positive crowning of the architecture of the State, the hieroglyph of reason’, the one that closes with its Self the work of the whole, the one that puts its signature to the law, ‘the dot on the i’”. In this respect, Giner disagrees with Hegel and flies the flag of Krausist theses to formulate his criticism of the ‘idolatry and superstition of the State’. This is how Giner distinguishes himself from the monarchical formula by further clarifying that this dot on the ‘i’ must be a “dot that, in any social opus, the individual puts ultimately, as the organ of the whole, though not a single determined individual nor in the person of the monarch” (Giner, 1923, p. 208).

For Krausists, it would be nonsensical to suppose that the government maintains and preserves a ‘supreme power’. They explain it in these terms: “The mistake of calling this power ‘supreme’ is one of the remnant vices of the old conception of monarchy” (Ahrens, 1878, pp. 162-163).

This also comes from the Hegelian idea of the absolute power of the national State, to which Krause opposes the inviolable sovereignty of individuals, families, social persons, regions and –at the top of all– the supreme limit of the League of Nations encompassing all of humanity. In this manner, this political absolutism derived from the arrogance of the State that the Spanish Krausists reject in Hegel is then tempered towards liberal positions by Krause’s philosophy:

It can not surprise, then, that to the expression that a man could say one day, *the State is me*, the mouth of the State may reply: *humanity is me*. Nor is it much that a disciple as close and as fond of Krause as Ahrens, says: “The least satisfactory and even dangerous doctrine is that of Hegel and his school, which considers the State as the head of society or as the unit and the order of all the particular spheres, classes, associations” (Rivacoba, 1963, pp. 104-105).

Now, we have to emphasize here that the Krausists were not the only isolated voices that defended anti-statist positions in Spain. There were many centrifugal sectors –of the left and right– in the Hispanic intellectual context of the time that also sought to restructure the State on bases that would nullify its omnipotence. In fact, statism had been criticised and rejected as an unjust and invasive current by the majority of nineteenth-century intellectuals and politicians who believed that the problem of the Spanish State was not the defence of the monarchy or the unification of the State since, in essence, “in Spain it was not pursued to *weave* any State” (Lacasta, 1984, p. 318).

On the contrary, one of its more particular circumstances that conditioned most our history has been the ‘centrifugal’ and anti-statist tendencies that came to subdue its competences. It is a problematic issue of our history, still not resolved satisfactorily even in our times, for instance, in the Catalan and Basque cases. As is well known, this problem marks the uneasy situation of the contradictions of peripheral Spain against centralism, as modes of political domination and of understanding our history.

In addition, the ‘political reading’ of Krause in Spain meant that the interest was focussed not so much on an impartial approach to its philosophical system as such, but on an interpretative use as a form of ideology or coherent social theory, to overcome definitively the old regime and link to the political determination of a Spanish bourgeoisie committed to the constitution of a modern State. That’s why sometimes Krause’s ideas had a resonance much more effective in parliamentary acts than in authentic university academic circles. This explains why the future and the development of Krausism in Spain has been inextricably linked to the political fate and the slow rise of the bourgeoisie in our country.

If we were to draw a chronological framework of legal Krausism in nineteenth-century Spain, we would have to begin by pointing out that the greatest boom of Krause’s global reception reached its peak during the *Revolutionary six-year* period, the so-called *Sexenio Revolucionario* which starts in 1868 with the overthrow of Queen Isabel II of Spain after the *Glorious Revolution*, and ends on 1874 with the Bourbon Restoration, when Alfonso XII became King after a coup d’état.

The revolution of the ’68 has been considered a *Krausist revolution* and implied the transition from an authoritarian to a liberal regime, and inspired the drafting of the Constitution of 1869, that is the first democratic Constitution of this country. It’s an important moment in Spain characterized by the recognition of freedoms and political rights, like the freedom of expression, freedom of education, and even the religious freedom is recognized. In this moment we find the most representative heads of Spanish Krausism in the Central University of Madrid.

What happens then after the Revolutionary Sexenio and how this affect to the assimilation of Krause’s philosophy in Spain? What happens when the project of the Democratic Revolution was canceled by the Bourbon Restoration that supposed the beginning of a process of political involution, of ideological repression and monarchical intolerance towards the intellectuals? This conservative process of Canovist Restoration supposed a qualitative change in the assumption of new ideologies that ended with the practical disappearance of Krause’s work and the repression of Krausist philosophers. Nevertheless, Hegelianism did not disappear altogether during the Restoration period.

We should remember that Krausism's exponents experienced a political persecution by Canova's regime that expelled them from their university chairs and drove them to continue their educational project in the *Institution Libre de Enseñanza* precisely to protect academic freedom. In contrast, a part of Hegelianism found a way to subsist and its doctrines were adapted to the times.

While the Krausists as a whole suffered political and religious repression of their Enlightened doctrines and were condemned to heterodoxy, a variant of right-wing Hegelianism managed to resist and adapt to the new situation created by the conservative bourgeoisie during the Bourbon Restoration –especially in the figure of Antonio María Fabié, who became a Minister of Cánovas. Fabié is described as “A man who is fully enshrined with all the constants of the Restoration: admirer of England; monarchical; conservative; centralist; aristocratising defender of private property and capitalism, against the federal left and socialist doctrines –in short, a true example of the end of the Spanish century; a political case of restoration projection. And, theoretically, a Hegel and a Philosophy of Law at the service of the monarchy and the political operation initiated by Antonio Cánovas del Castillo” (Lacasta, 1984, p. 319).

It is interesting to underline this relationship between a certain derivation of right-wing Hegelianism and the political organisation of the Restoration, precisely because many of the Krausist critiques of the centralised State are closely related to the fact that the State was represented in his time by the centralising framework of *caciquismo*<sup>3</sup>. As Laporta points out –fairly, in our opinion– “it is very doubtful that Spanish Krausism would have insisted so much on this principle [of self-government] if it had not developed in a climate of great political heteronomy. Centralism, ‘chiefism’ and ‘caciquil’ structure are intimately connected and typical characters of Canovas's organisation of politics. In contrast, decentralisation and an ‘*anticaciquil*’ struggle are constants of Krausist thought” (Laporta, 1974, p. 181).

This is a factor that tilted the balance in favour of a legal philosophy that, like the Krausist one, did not grant the State a role as protagonist or as unitary in the social fabric. Krause established a distinction between the official State and the unofficial State, and made a great efforts to transfer its powers to society, in a desire for decentralisation that proposes a non-stateised self-government that dilutes the “Statehood” in the intermediate social bodies and even in the individual.

This distinction is to be understood in the framework of the criticisms that Krausist liberals made of the devaluation of democratic principles carried out du-

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<sup>3</sup> *Caciquismo* is a Spanish Word that can be translated as a kind of “chiefism”, that is, a political system dominated by the power of authoritarian local political bosses.

ring the period of the Canovist Restoration, with the predominance of an oligarchy prevailing at the time. This interpretive key lets us understand Giner's words against the State that wants to control everything and that asphyxiates modern freedoms.

#### IV. Conclusion

There is therefore a marked overlap between Krausist philosophy and the dominant and determinant political and social conditions of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spain, in which a liberal bourgeoisie with a marked progressive and democratic character needed an ideological weapon with which to confront the authoritarian regime of the Restoration. In this manner, Krause's social theory served as the perfect spearhead, since its objective was to expand social integration through a more plural, secular, harmonic and integrating legal system.

Along with the philosophical and spiritual affinity of the Krausian system with the traditional religious sensibility of the Spanish culture –that led it to triumph where other doctrines had failed–, there were the implications of an ethical or practical nature that served as a base for the intellectual minorities of our country who supported Krausism to give shape to a social reform project of enormous political, educational and social implications, based on democratic and egalitarian principles.

Hence the crucial role that Krause confer to the public opinion and education, which are crucial to ensuring democratic legitimacy. Instead of legislation and coercion, which Krause saw failed in their context as supreme legal life means, he called for the education of individuals and peoples in the spirit of justice. Therefore, coercion in the law would be recognised as a power that needs strength to be wielded, but that is not essential to the concept of law because, in Krausist terms, the latest sovereignty also includes the law in each individual.

Thus, its conception of the limitations of State intervention, its broad and plural concept of social sovereignty and its definition of the autonomy and competences of the legal subject, represent incontestable virtues of Krause's doctrine, and possibly make it the best ally a large portion of the 19th-century Spanish intellectuals could find.

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