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Pantheism as cosmopolitanism: Karl Christian Friedrich Krause's conception of a global human league

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Abstract

Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781–1832) left for posterity an impressive and astonishingly contemporary *corpus* of philosophical creativity. Not only does it cover numerous topics of theoretical and practical philosophy, from a pantheistic-cosmopolitan point of view, but, in terms of the history of philosophy, it may be seen as one of the first works from a European pen which also appreciates the Indian roots of European thinking in their systematic importance. It combines them with Platonic metaphysics and Kant's transcendental philosophy to form a system of philosophy that is truly intercultural. In what follows, Krause's fundamental argument for pantheism is presented before it is argued that Krause's pantheism entails a cosmopolitan theory of human society according to which it is a postulate of practical reason to realize a cosmopolitan global league of humanity.

Keywords: Pantheism; cosmopolitanism; German idealism; Karl Christian Friedrich Krause

Krause's argument for pantheism

Krause's pantheism is a particular philosophy of the Absolute.¹ Krause already formulated the guiding metaphysical principle of his theory of the Absolute in 1813, as follows:

My main principle is that all Science is based on the intuition (*Anschauung*) of an infinite substance. This intuition cannot be proven from the Principle of Sufficient Reason (*dem Satze des Grundes*), but may only be shown present (*vorhanden*) within the human spirit. Everything that is, is this substance and within this substance. And all scientific knowledge must equivalently be that primordial intuition (*Uranschauung*) itself, and within it. (Hohlfeld and Wünsche (1903), 362–363)²

Krause's entire theoretical programme may be understood as a justification and conceptual-systematic formulation of this monistic guiding principle. From an epistemological perspective, Krause's work uses transcendental reflection to present the intuition of the one infinite substance as an intellectual vision (*Schau*) of the Absolute. It is in principle accessible to every human being to identify, in the course of this vision, what is immediately given to the human being as the in-principle infinite content of the System of Philosophy.

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Krause calls the transcendental path to immediately certain knowledge of the Absolute 'the analytical-ascending' part of philosophy. It is the ultimate starting point for the development of his system of philosophy; the epistemological propaedeutic of his metaphysics. It proceeds as follows:

Starting out from the first certain knowledge that is found in every consciousness [it] constantly rises to higher and higher knowledge, until the discovery of the fundamental knowledge (*Grunderkenntnis*) [of the Absolute, BPG]. This must show itself on this way, if a System of Science is to be possible for the human mind. (Krause (1886), 4)³

The first certain phenomenological knowledge, found in every reflecting Ego, according to Krause, can be stated as follows: 'In my independence as I (*Selbstständigkeit als Ich*) is included my independence as spirit (*Geist*), then my independence as body (*Leib*), finally my united independence, whereby I am an independent being made up of spirit and body united' (Krause (1869), 103). If the Ego recognizes itself phenomenologically as body, according to Krause, then it also recognizes that it always already understands its body as part of Nature, which encompasses it.⁴ And if the Ego recognizes itself as Spirit (*Geist*), it recognizes itself as part of an encompassing realm of Reason or Spirit. If the Ego, in self-observation, finally recognizes itself as a union of Nature and Reason, then it recognizes itself as a human being. As Krause says: 'The Ego therefore finds itself as Spirit, and in the sense mentioned as body, and as the essential union (*Vereinwesen*) of both, i.e. as human being' (*ibid.*, 180). According to Krause, the fact that Nature and Reason may be reconciled in human beings is grounded in the fact that Nature and Reason indeed differ in essence, but are always already mediated by each other: 'Nature, therefore, insofar as it is rational (organic), is in Reason and is incorporated (*aufgenommen*) into Reason. [. . .] But Reason, insofar as it is natural, is in Nature and is incorporated into Nature insofar as Nature is Reason' (Krause (2007), 81–82). For Krause, Reason and Nature are distinguishable but absolutely equally valuable determinations of the human being; the Ego participates in Reason through Spirit, in Nature through the body, and as a human being it finds itself phenomenologically as a being in which Nature and Reason are always already mediated.⁵

For Krause (1869, 104) it was of great importance that the Ego as spirit is not axiologically superior to the Ego as body:

And as far as the relation of this teaching to life is concerned, it is of the greatest practical importance how the relation of the spirit to the body appears to the human being. For example, if the human being thinks of the spirit as being of the same essence as the body, then they will also respect the body as something essential, worthy in itself. They will take care of the body, protect it, develop it, and try to keep it healthy and beautiful. On the other hand, if someone is of the opinion that the spirit is not at all independent, but only a specific activity of the body, perhaps only the highest animal function, then they will easily fall into the opinion that if the body dies, so it is with the spirit, and, for just that reason, the human being is only obliged to mainly and primarily care for their body.

For Krause, the phenomenological inventory of the essence of the Ego yields a central insight for the further course of the analytical-ascending part of philosophy. This insight can be stated as follows:

The Ego may perceive and describe its existential constitution as a human being, as captured by self-observation, but cannot explain it from its position in the whole of being.

Krause argues that the Ego does not sufficiently encompass Nature or Spirit in such a way that it could ontologically bring about the synthesis of Nature and Spirit, which is constitutive of its humanity. This it finds always already mediated.⁶ From the standpoint of constitution theory, as its *relata*, neither Nature nor Reason may bring about this synthesis. The Ego that has become conscious of itself as a human being therefore faces the question of the constitutive ontological ground of Nature, Reason, and their unification, to form humanity. It faces the question of the ground in which, and by which – ‘in virtue of’ – its being and its essence are made possible:

So we cannot avoid asking about the ground of Reason, Nature, and humanity. That is, we must rise to the thought of a being (*zu dem Gedanken eines Wesens erheben*) in which both Reason and Nature are incorporated (*enthalten seien*), that whereby, that is, according to its essence (*Wesenheit*), these two are determined (*bestimmt seien*): that which is also the ground for the union of both, according to which they are humanity (*die Menschheit*). (*ibid.*, 204)

This thought brought about in phenomenological self-reflection by the Principle of Sufficient Reason, about whose validity nothing is said at this point in the analytical-ascending part of Science, is the thought of a being developed out of the Ego, in which and through which Nature, Reason, and their synthesis are ontologically constituted as humanity.

But this does not yet prove that this thought is the thought of the sought-after Absolute. In order to show that this thought which presents itself to the Ego is in fact the thought of the Absolute, Krause first argues that Nature, Reason, and humanity constitute what is adequately designated as ‘world’:

By the word ‘world’ [is signified] both Nature, infinite in its kind, and Reason, infinite in its kind, as well as humanity, infinite in its kind. For, even if these three beings, each of its kind, are infinite, they are nevertheless finite [. . .] because each of them, as such, is not[hing] what each other, as such, is (*ein Jedes davon, als solches, nichts ist, Was ein jedes Andere, als solches, ist*). (Krause (1828), 305)

Krause thus uses an absolute notion of infinity. For, although Nature, Reason, and humanity are in a certain respect infinite realms, for Krause this is not sufficient to speak of their infinity *per se*. The fact that Nature is not Reason is sufficient to show that, in Krause’s system, Reason, Nature, and humanity are, seen absolutely, finite realms of being:

We have thought of Reason as infinite in its way. But, because it is not Nature, because by itself it is not humankind either, Reason is nevertheless thought as finite in this respect. In the same way, of course, we also thought of Nature as infinite in its way, as infinite in space, in time, and with regard to strength. But it is not Spirit, [not] Reason, it is also not humanity on its own. Therefore, it is also thought to be finite and limited in this respect. (Krause (1869), 203)

It follows next that, using this concept of the world, the thought of the being that grounds Nature, Reason, and humanity is the thought of the constitutive ground of the world. In a second step, the world is further defined as the realm of being of everything finite constituted by Nature, Reason, and humanity:

As far as [. . .] the intuition (*Schauung*) world is concerned: this is usually defined as the entirety of everything finite (*Inbegriff von allem Endlichen*), or as the totality of

finite beings (*das Ganze aller endlichen Wesen*), or as the aggregate of things (*die Gesamtheit der Dinge*). So the world is not thought of as originally a whole, prior to and above all parts, in essential unity, that is in essence-unity (*in Wesenheit-Einheit*), but only as a union of the finite (*ein Vereinanzes des Endlichen*). (Krause (1828), 305)

According to Krause, there is nothing finite in any respect that may not be subordinated to Nature, Reason, or humanity. It follows that the world constituted by Nature, Reason, and humanity is the entirety of finitude. And, therefore, the thought of the ground of the world is the thought of an unconditional and infinite being, i.e. of the Absolute. Formulated *ex negativo*: if this thought were not the thought of an unconditional and infinite supreme being, it would not be able to provide the ultimate justification of Nature, Reason, and humanity that Krause was seeking. This is because it would itself, according to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, imply the question of its ground. Therefore, in Krause's system, the groundless ground may only be the thought of the one, unconditional, and infinite Essence.

As a thought of the one infinite and unconditional Essence, the thought of the Absolute is, in its content, an infinite and unconditional thought:

Therefore, whoever thinks this thought purely and clearly must also think that there is nothing whatsoever outside this being (*Wesen*). From the other side, however, in this thought, it is thought that the infinite being contains everything finite that is there. For, because there is nothing outside it, and because finitude *is*, as we know with immediate certainty, everything finite can only be thought of as being (*seyend*) in the one unconditional, infinite, being (*Wesen*) that is thought (*gedacht*). Therefore, since the one infinite being is thought of as everything determinate as being in itself (*in sich seyend*), it is thought of as the one ground of all finite things; therefore also as the one ground of the world, as the one ground of Reason, Nature, and humanity. (Krause (1836), 407)

The thought of the Absolute determined in this way, if the unconditional and infinite ground of the world really expresses itself in it, leads to the knowledge that everything finite that the Ego is able to recognize is contained in the thought of the Absolute, and is recognized as being contained in it: whatever the object of its thought, when the Ego knowingly recognizes it, it recognizes it not only as ontologically grounded in and through the Absolute, but also as epistemologically included in the thought of the Absolute.⁷

It follows therefore that, if the thought of the Absolute is the self-indication of the Absolute, there is no object of reference outside the Absolute. Everything that the Ego can know, everything that is, is then the one infinite and unconditional Absolute, and the finite constituted in and through it:

Let us now consider this thought: Essence or God (*Wesen oder Gott*), in relation to all other definite thoughts. So, we first find that this thought is infinite and unconditional in its content, that is, *that it is a self-same and whole thought*. For whatever finite, definite, thing may be thought of, its object (*dessen Gegenstand*) cannot be thought outside God, but as within God, as grounded and determined through God. *Therefore, all finite specific thoughts, including the thought: I, are contained in this one essence-thought (diesem Einen Wesengedanken) or God thought (Gottgedanken).* (*ibid.*, 410)⁸

But whether the thought of the Absolute also corresponds to its reality, that is, whether the Ego is authorized to interpret its thought of the Absolute as an immediate, certain, self-revelation of the Absolute, has not yet been decided on the analytical-ascending path of philosophy. To be able to demonstrate that the idea of the Absolute is in fact to be understood as the self-revelation of the Absolute in the finite Ego, mediated by the Ego, and that the idea of the Absolute guarantees its own validity in and through itself, one must first inspect Krause's concept of knowledge.

In Krause's System, knowledge is a triadic relation, the existence of which presupposes a subject of knowledge, an object of knowledge, and a knowledge relation, understood as a formal ground of knowledge. The knowledge ground relates the subject to the object in such a way that the essence of the object of knowledge appears within the subject's consciousness, and knowledge is thereby constituted. For Krause, knowing is not, as with Kant, transcendently incapable of recognizing the essence of the thing-in-itself, but consists precisely in recognizing things as they exist outside the knowledge relation:

We find that knowing as independent (*Selbständiges*) is related with the known as independent; indeed, in such a way that both likewise obtain (*bestehen*) within knowledge as independent, and yet are related. Or in other words, the knowing and the known are united in knowledge as self-essentials (*Selbwesenliche*), so that they obtain as self-essentials. [. . .] And if I recognize something that is outside me [. . .] then I again distinguish myself as that independent from those recognized things, also as independent. And they are united in knowledge as independent, with me as independent. They do not pass over into me (*sie gehen nicht in mich über*), do not give up their independence in mine. They remain, recognized by me, as independent as if I did not recognize them, and yet they are united with me in knowledge. (Krause (1869), 190–191)⁹

Consequently, recognizing a thing is 'a relation of the essential union of the recognized as independent with the recognizing as independent' (*ibid.*, 254). Depending on the form of the knowledge relation, it has different degrees of certainty. Some cognition is then called 'knowledge' (*Wissen*) precisely when 'the presence of an essence in consciousness is complete' (*ibid.*, 112): if the object of cognition is in consciousness, but the essence of it is only insufficiently recognized, depending on the degree of cognition, the relation is not knowledge, but 'suspicion, belief, presumption, opinion (*Ahnen, Glauben, Vermuten, Meinen*)' (*ibid.*).¹⁰

Krause's concept of knowledge leads to the following conclusion about the thought of the absolute ground of the world, recognized through the self-observation of the Ego: while the Ego is the epistemological principle of its own essence in the analytical-ascending part of philosophy, anything that transcends the area of phenomenal self-observation must be united adequately with the Ego by a formal ground of knowledge that goes beyond the Ego to constitute an object of knowledge. Therefore, the Absolute, as an unconditional and infinite being, must also be adequately united with the subject of knowledge by a ground of knowledge, if knowledge of it is to be possible. For 'for every thought that transcends the Ego [must] be a thought of an external ground with regard to the Ego (*in Ansehung des Ichs*) and be accepted' (*ibid.*, 255–256).¹¹ Therefore, the thought of the Absolute is a thought that transcends the finitude of the Ego, and places the Ego ontologically and epistemologically within the infinity of the Absolute. Therefore, the Ego, driven by its self-observation, has already transcended into the Absolute, through the thought of the Absolute, and can recognize that the only reason for knowing the thought of the Absolute can be the Absolute itself.¹² The thought of

the Absolute could not be thought at all, if it were not always already the self-revelation of the infinite being in the finite consciousness of the Ego:

When we are conscious of this thought: [. . .] God, we are at the same time conscious that this thought, even as our thought, cannot be grounded and caused by ourselves, nor by any other finite being, but that the possibility and the reality of this thought of ours can only be thought of as being based on the content of this thought, through essence or God himself (*durch Wesen oder Gott selbst*). (*ibid.*, 256)¹³

This immediately certain knowledge is the sought-after intuition of the Absolute, the fundamental view: God (*die Grundschau: Gott*).¹⁴ Its implementation enables the Ego to locate its thinking and being, as well as the world itself, ontologically and epistemologically in the Absolute.

Cosmopolitan pantheism and the league of humanity

Because, in Krause's system of philosophy, the world is the realm of being of the finite and conditioned, and because the Absolute has been recognized as the one unconditional and infinite being, Krause may, on the one hand, rule out *pantheism* as a suitable ontology, because on Krause's understanding, pantheism is the thesis that the Absolute is numerically identical to the world and therefore, on Krause's account, leads to a contradictory identification of the finite with the infinite (or of the conditioned with the unconditioned).¹⁵ But precisely because the Absolute is viewed as an infinite and unconditional being, Krause may also rule out *theism* as an adequate ontological paradigm. This is because theism, understood as the thesis that there is a substantial ontological distinction between God and the world, would contradict the unconditionality and infinity of the Absolute: if the world were to stand outside the Absolute, ontologically and epistemologically – that is, if it were understandable from within itself in its being and suchness – this would be the abolition of the infinity and unconditionality of the Absolute as the sole principle of reality.

However, both pantheism and theism are right insofar as: on the one hand, there is, or can be thought of, nothing outside God; and, on the other hand, the world as the embodiment of Nature, and Spirit, and the humanity constituted from both, is not self-explanatory and therefore requires an absolute ground. Therefore, the only adequate ontological framework for the System of Philosophy is *panentheism*, which dialectically mediates between pantheism and theism, and locates the world ontologically and epistemologically within the Absolute, without reducing its being and essence to the world:

In the intuition of Essence this is also found: that Essence, as the One, is also as such, or in itself, under itself, and through itself, everything (*auch an sich, oder in sich, unter sich, und durch sich Alles*), also the essence of everything finite. Therefore, the statement made according to this insight must be: that the One in itself and through itself is also the All (*dass das Eine in sich und durch sich auch das All sei*) [. . .]. And, because in the intuition of Essence (*Wesenschauung*) it is recognized that God is also everything in and through itself, the Science could well be called 'panentheism'. (*ibid.*, 313)¹⁶

If the Absolute is not opposed to the world, but the world is rather a relational-intrinsic determination of the Absolute, then what happens in the world is not without consequences for God, because the history of the world as such and of every finite entity is metaphysically nothing other than part of the one life of the Absolute:

God is in Himself the one life, supremely as Ur-Essence, but then as being in Himself the element-structure of all finite beings. Therefore, the one life of God contains the life of Reason, the life of Nature, and both united as the life of humanity. [. . .] God freely causes the steady becoming of His one life, and, like Him, all finite beings also cause their inner finite life in Him with finite freedom. [. . .] The one life of God is an organic whole. And all finite beings, insofar as they live, are also united with each other, and with God as the Ur-Essence. And every finite life of every finite being is a finite organic whole, akin to the one organic life of God, therefore also the life of every human being and the life of humanity. (Krause (1874), 188)

Based on this insight into the fundamental structure of reality, Krause's panentheism, which is initially developed from the phenomenological self-observation of the Ego, leads to important conclusions for practical philosophy: because the essence of humanity is established in and by the Absolute, and because the life of humanity participates in the freedom of the Absolute, it follows, according to Krause, that humanity ought to freely realize its eternal essence in time. This means that humankind, as an image of the one, self-same, and whole Absolute, ought to form consistently in time one and the same whole being: 'All the commandments according to which each individual human being should form his life are contained in one thing: Be human! Or: be God-like within the limits of your essence, your humanity!' (Krause (1843), 513).¹⁷ To specify what it means for humanity to freely realize its essence in time, Krause turns to his panentheistic theory of society.

For Krause, the philosophical theory of society is the 'science of ideas and laws according to which independent, free rational beings (*freie Vernunftwesen*) unite in a good and beautiful life so that they live like one rational being' (Krause (1868), VIII fn.). The goal of social theory is to show how a society should be structured, so that the ideal of humanity may be regarded as realized in it.¹⁸ In order to achieve this goal, in an ideal social theory, the essence of humanity must first be recognized by Reason, since the essence of humanity is both the *archetype* and *teletype* of humankind.¹⁹ Following this, a historically informed view of the current state of the art can recognize discrepancies between the Human Archetype and the current historical picture. Because of this, in a last step, political orientations may be worked out, for how the Human Archetype may be more completely realized in the historical here and now.²⁰ According to Krause, a complete social theory is therefore grounded in three distinct dimensions: (1) specification of the normative archetype of society (ideal theory), (2) a historical inventory of actual social conditions, and (3) the development of political programmes. This assessment of the form and task of social theory, which brings Krause close to critical theory, has lost none of its relevance for current discussions.

The central concept of Krause's panentheistic social theory is the Human League (*Menschheitbund*).²¹ Although Krause attempted various clarifications of the concept of the Human League in the course of his work, the core idea did not vary. For Krause, 'The Human League' is always the name of an ideal state of global civil society, which is to be historically realized, and therefore designates

the essential, artful society of all people on earth, in which they unite as people to be as one, a whole and organic humanity (*um als Eine, eine ganze und organische Menschheit zu sein*), to live and grow in themselves and in all their relationships to God, to Nature and to Reason, and to humanity in the universe (*Weltall*). (Krause (1900), 1)

The essence of the Human League, consequently, is spelled out by Krause in more detail as follows:

The social union of all human beings as pure, whole, human beings for the whole life of humankind. The Human League, as the league for the whole, pure, human life, is by its essence (nature) a league that encompasses all people. Not only can and should all people participate, but, before this is the case, they themselves do not live up to their idea. Only then is it a league for everything human. It engages the members of all other societies without disturbing the connections which they have, as members of other societies. It thereby becomes the most secure and most irrepressible force (*Gewalt*) on earth. In it, the quiet, peaceful harmony of all human things and societies, among themselves, is formed and maintained, simply through the power of Reason and feeling, through the gentle means of love. (*ibid.*, 426)

As the union of all human beings, the Human League is the all-encompassing society of human (sub-)societies, and a picture of the inner purpose of the structure of the Absolute:

The Human League [is] not a society alongside, or just a society ‘outside-above’ (*ausserüber*), the state, church [. . .]. But, as God (*Wesen*) is related to the structure of Essence (*Wesengliedbau*), as its inner essence (*Inwesenthume*), so the Human League is related to human society as a whole. Therefore, the Human League has all other human societies in-under itself (*inunter sich*). (Krause (1890), 124)²²

For Krause, the Human League is a global civil society that encompasses all people. This implies the absolute equality of all people, regardless of their origin, gender, or physical constitution, because the equality of all people results solely from their *God-likeness*, which is based in the Absolute. That is, every individual characteristic of human life, and every recognition of human equality, takes precedence under natural law.²³ Krause is therefore able to formulate this: ‘All people are equal (*gleich*). They are next to each other, not among each other. No one is subject to the other. But, all together, they obey the law of God in moral freedom (*dem Gesetze Gottes in sittlicher Freiheit*)’ (*ibid.*, 127).²⁴ Furthermore: ‘All individual people are, then, completely equal to each other with regard to all their abilities, dispositions, and powers, and all the laws of their spiritual and physical and spiritual life’ (Krause (1820), lxxx fn.). For Krause, it was therefore obvious that there is absolute equality of man and woman: ‘Man and woman are equally essential to humanity, so woman is in no way subordinate to man. In all her powers of spirit and heart and body, woman is just as capable and original as man in all parts of human destiny’ (Krause (2022), 102–103).

Krause therefore vehemently opposes the oppression of women by men:

The female sex is just as capable of all-round, particular, and consistent development as the male. And humanity itself remains only imperfectly and partly educated as long as the beautiful, weaker sex of women ungratefully and unfeelingly is oppressed by the brute strength of men, has to lag behind the male in some part of human determination. Virtue and love, science and art, law and religion, all must first be shaped and perfected in a male and female way before humankind can boast of having expressed itself harmoniously on all sides. The triumph of humankind is only male and female uniform education, in free harmonious interplay. (*ibid.*, 103)

Against this background, Krause’s Human League may be viewed as a political cosmopolitanism that follows from a moral cosmopolitanism, because the absolute equality of all human beings is based on natural law in the human being constituted by the Absolute. And this therefore not only implies that human beings belong to a universal moral society and are part of a common moral cosmos, but also that the essence of

humanity is so designed that a world-spanning, global political order must be established, which includes all people as citizens of this order.²⁵ ‘The cosmopolitan Human League’ describes, in Krause’s words, the ideal state of global civil society in which

Every human being and every human society exists in, through and with (*in, durch und mit*) the whole, in and for itself (*in und für sich selbst*) and essentially lives (*wesen-lebet*). And all only determine each other, liberate each other, guide each other, educate each other, and strengthen each other for the good (*und sich alle nur zum Guten wechselbestimmen, wechselbefreien, wechselanleiten, wechselbilden und wechselbekräftigen*). (Krause (1873), 14)²⁶

The driving historical force behind the establishment of the Human League, and the goal to be achieved through the Human League in higher perfection, is moral freedom. This is because ‘the peculiarly essential thing about humankind is moral freedom (*sittliche Freiheit*)’ (Krause (1811), VII, 26). Freedom for Krause is ethically, metaphysically and socially oriented, and consists of three dimensions: (a) freedom *from* external restrictions, (b) freedom *to* realize the humanity expressed in one’s own individuality, and (c) freedom to associate *with* other people, to unite in social spheres for this purpose.

For Krause, freedom is therefore not exhausted by the quantity of possibilities of free living, but consists in the qualitative possibilities of being able to lead an individual life in a human way. The possibility of being able to lead a truly dignified life presupposes not only formal human freedom but also the guarantee of material goods. In this, Krause’s Human League proves to be a direct forerunner of the capability approach that is fiercely debated today.²⁷ Krause’s concern in the Human League is to enable a life for all people, in and from really meaningful formal and material freedom.

Freedom is the driving force behind the historical realization of the Human League: human beings, as free beings, cannot and must not be *forced* to realize the Human League. The development and founding of the cosmopolitan Human League as a global civil society can and must only take place through freedom. The realization of the ideal state of humanity is therefore not a historical necessity, but only possible in and through the freedom of humanity as an expression of its historical creative power: ‘Humanity is free, it can and should educate itself by free will (*in freiem Willen*)’ (*ibid.*, XVII, 68).²⁸ Therefore, in Krause’s system, any paternalism by social forces, or interventions by social institutions in social processes, are excluded from the promotion of the Human League, insofar as they are based on coercion.²⁹ The establishment of the Human League may only be promoted through free dialogue.³⁰

However, human freedom is not only the driving force behind the establishment of the Human League. The complete freedom of humanity, and of all human societies, is also the goal of the development of the Human League, because ‘the Human League in its entire establishment (*Einrichtung*) and work function (*Werkthätigkeit*), [is] in pursuance of pure morality, and in particular of pure moral freedom (*reinsittlichen Freiheit*)’ (Krause (1820), lxxxviii). Individual freedom therefore is not only *ab ovo* a good, absolutely worth protecting, that global civil society ‘must keep sacred, promote, strengthen and preserve and make consistently inviolable’ (Krause (1900), 2).³¹ But genuine freedom can fully unfold itself only when the Human League is realized: ‘The Human League absolutely follows the principle of making the greatest possible freedom of every individual and every subordinate person feasible and producible through social free will. And if not higher rights are demanded, not to limit the freedom of the individual even in the smallest trifle’ (*ibid.*, 255). But if freedom is both the driving force and the goal of the development of the Human League, then it follows that the more fully the Human League is established as the social framework for the realization of this freedom, the more perfectly human

freedom will be realized. The freedom of the individual and the realization of the Human League as an idea of social freedom are thus in a reciprocal organic relationship and mutually dependent. So it was clear to Krause that ‘everything human [only] appears in its true light in the idea of humanity as a whole’ (Krause (1811), 2). As Krause rhetorically asks:

The life and destiny of the human being and humanity: are they different (*verschieden*), or even merely to be distinguished (*oder auch nur unterschieden*)? Can a human being live and attain their life’s destiny without humanity attaining theirs, and vice versa? Or is the one only alive in and with and through (*in und mit und durch*) the other, as mutual cause and effect? (Krause (1893), 9)

Although the idea of the Human League is the free realization of a cosmopolitan civil society, and every human being should voluntarily participate in the realization of this ideal of humanity, the ideal state of human society does not involve the levelling of cultural differences. Rather, it emphasizes the cultural diversity of human life as the infinite formation of the one humanity, grounded in the Absolute: ‘The peoples of the earth should and will retain their uniqueness. They will purify them, exalt them, socialize them. They will be one humanity consisting of brother peoples’ (Krause (1811), XXVII, 116). Because:

Destroying the diversity of nations is neither possible nor desirable: this would mean dissolving the life of humanity itself. The purely humanely educated person (*der rein menschlich Gebildete*) gratefully acknowledges this institution of divine providence. They (*er*) deeply revere and love the people of which they were born a member, to whom they owe most of their upbringing and the development of their personality. [. . .] But they are far from claiming more from their people than is due to them. They do not want all peoples to be like their own. They do not reject and despise anything because it is not like their home. (*ibid.*, XXXVII, 145)³²

The fact that cultural diversity is preserved in the Human League does not, however, imply an uncritical appropriation of past and superseded social structures. On the one hand, the historical contingency of previous human development must be included in the development of the Human League, and it must be noted that current social conditions are historically conditioned and therefore bring different starting points for the development of the Human League with them.³³ On the other hand, it is precisely this historical awareness that enables a critical view of social conditions, which can show which structures can be adopted at all within the framework of a cosmopolitan civil society: ‘Therefore I assert that what has been handed down, as such, and because it has been handed down, has no right, nor validity, to exist for all time, but only if, and to the extent that, it is still contemporary (*es noch jetzt zeitgemäß ist*)’ (Krause (1820), xxxviii). Those social structures that hinder the free development of the Human League must be overcome, historically and socially, through politics; as an expression of the social will, directed towards the realization of the Human League.³⁴

Krause was sure that the idea of the Human League, as an ideal global civil society for the realization of true humanity, is appealing to every human being:

This doctrine of the essential life of humankind and of the Human League is so simple, so spiritual and pleasant (*angemüthig*), appealing to the heart (*anherzig*), so easy to understand, and speaks to every still uncorrupted heart so easily and so intimately that only a few generations will pass until the time when the comrades of the more educated people (*Genossen der gebildeteren Völker*) could hardly imagine how a time

was possible in which people did not have this insight and this feeling (*diese Einsicht und dieses Gefühl*). (Krause (1890), 123)³⁵

Therefore, there was no doubt for Krause that the Human League as a global civil society can and will be historically realized through the free cooperation of people, because, although the individual is always already influenced in their thinking, feeling, and will, by the (historical) society in which they stand, and have been socialized, they are in principle in a position to change social conditions, according to the ideal of humanity, through their own action.³⁶

The Human League is the all-encompassing human civil society in which the ideal of humanity is socially realized out of and in freedom. And this enables every individual, and every social league, to freely realize their essence. And the realization of this cosmopolitan society lies in the hands of humanity itself. Therefore, the ideal of the Human League as an expression of freedom is not only a postulate of Practical Reason, but also a utopia of the *not-yet*, with the purpose of changing social reality, and the self-perception of humanity. As Krause puts it: 'The aim of life is an attainable one, set before [Humankind] by God for eternity, not an unattainable goal in the mist of the infinite distance' (Krause (1843), 116).³⁷

The importance of Krause's cosmopolitan pantheism for current debates

In Krause's system of philosophy, humanity is at the centre of the Absolute, as the union of Reason and Nature, and is called upon, and is capable of realizing, the covenant of humankind as the temporal image of the Absolute, in and by freedom. As a philosophy of freedom this is not only readily consistent with the current debates on the justification of human rights, but is also to be understood as a historically early formulation of the neo-Aristotelian capability approach: the Human League as a society of societies is the realization of the Idea of Humanity, which is based on the idea of the absolute equal worth of all human beings. Within the framework of a cosmopolitan civil society, the Human League provides every human being with the formal and material conditions for a dignified life in and by moral freedom.

With Krause we have an astonishingly modern social theory. It not only applies to the debates on particularism and cosmopolitanism, on liberalism and communitarianism, on the justification of human dignity and human rights, but in view of the ecological crisis of our time may also be connected to debates about the rights of Nature. For, for Krause, Nature is a determination of the Absolute that is absolutely equivalent to the Spirit, and therefore has intrinsic value.

Notes

1. Krause also calls the Absolute 'God' or 'Essence' (*Wesen*). Krause saw himself as essentially a successor of Kant who, breathing the spirit of German idealism went, with Kant, beyond Kant, in that he subjected Kant's transcendental philosophy to a metaphysical re-reading. According to his own assessment, Krause has solved the problem arising from Kant's philosophy of 'whether the Ideas of Reason (*Vernunftideen*) are not related to the categories (*Kategorien*) (his highest concepts of the Understanding (*obersten Verstandesbegriffen*)) in the same way that the categories are related to sensuality' (Krause (1869), 228). For a general introduction to the philosophy of Krause, from his immediate circle of students, see Hohlfeld (1879) and Leonhardi (1905). For current introductions, see Göcke (2012), Wollgast (2016), and Göcke (2018).
2. All translations from the German original are due to Stephen Priest (Oxford University) and myself.
3. Krause assumed that the vision (*Schau*) of the Absolute is possible for every human being. Cf. Krause (1892), 91. In this way, Krause's theory of the vision of the Absolute is distinct from that of Schelling: 'Not a few "chosen ones" as in Schelling's intellectual view, but all people can raise themselves up to it' (Wollgast (1990), 25).

4. Cf. Krause (1869), 84: 'We claim that the whole body is formed by Nature; that it is, and persists, in Nature, that it is created, that it is born, that it grows, that it decreases, that it decays. These are all actions of Nature. Therefore, in this respect, the body belongs to Nature rather than to Spirit.'

5. Cf. Hofmann (1988), 270.

6. See also Kodalle (1985), 56.

7. Although not possible for humanity, due to its finitude, complete knowledge of this thought would therefore analytically imply, in the sense of Leibniz, that all other knowledge is conditioned by this infinite and unconditional knowledge. For everything finite and conditioned is only what it is through its unconditional and infinite ground.

8. Cf. Krause (1869), 261–262.

9. Krause understands the differing degrees of knowledge, and the process of knowing, within the framework of a correspondence theory of truth, because 'what is true must be thought of as it is in itself, so that [in] knowledge, the presentation of the object (*die Vorstellung des Gegenstandes*) agrees with the object itself' (Krause (1869), 6). Cf. also Krause (1892), 53.

10. Cf. Krause (1869), 112, *passim*:

I use the word: 'knowing' (*Erkennen*), in a quite general and comprehensive sense, to denote any presence of any essence (*Wesenlichen*), or of any object (*Gegenstandes*), in consciousness. This presence might now be perfect and complete or it might still be inadequate and incomplete. When a being's presence in consciousness is complete, we usually use the word 'knowledge' (*Wissen*). If, however, this presence of an object in consciousness is not yet complete, still imperfect, then we use various other words, e.g. 'suspicion', 'belief', 'presumption', 'opinion' (*Ahnen, Glauben, Vermuten, Meinen*).

11. Cf. *ibid.*, 256: 'This assertion then applies to every thought that exceeds the Ego, whether that thought is of something finite and conditioned, or infinite and unconditioned. But this assertion is most valid with regard to the thought of the unconditional, infinite being or God, awakened above.'

12. Because proving something means recognizing 'that its essence must be as it is in a higher whole' (*ibid.*, 12), a proof of the existence of the Absolute as a proof that the thought of the Absolute corresponds to its reality, is conceptually excluded: For the Absolute is conceived as the highest whole, outside which there is nothing that could be used to prove its existence.

13. Cf. also *ibid.*, 265: 'If we think that thoughts are beings, then we must also recognize these thoughts of ours as being grounded and caused (*begründet und verursacht*) by Essence itself (*durch Wesen selbst*).' For a further analysis of the concept of the vision of being (*Wesenschau*), see Kodalle (1985).

14. See also Wollgast (1990), 22:

Human self-knowledge, and therefore all knowledge, presupposes an absolute principle of 'being' (*Wesen*) that makes the unity of thinking and being (*Sein*) possible in the first place. The subject searching for indubitable knowledge (*Wissen*), and thereby reflecting on itself, presupposes the Absolute, recognizes that it finds itself all along within the Absolute, that it can only recognize itself and the Absolute through the Absolute.

15. There is an ongoing discussion about the concepts of, and relations between, panentheism, pantheism, and theism, which due to limitations in space can only be mentioned. See, for example, Göcke (2013), Göcke (2014), Göcke (2015), Göcke (2017), Göcke (2019), Lataster (2014), Lataster (2015), Lataster & Bilimoria (2018), and Tabaczek (2022). For further discussion of Krause's panentheism against the background of these debates, see Göcke (2022).

16. 'Panentheism' is probably Krause's most successful neologism, although, as Krause was aware, the thing designated by it had its beginnings in Indian mysticism. In the current theological and religious-philosophical debate, panentheism is treated as a promising answer to the question of God's relation to the world. Cf. Medhananda (2022) for an analysis of the influence of Indian traditions on Krause's philosophy.

17. Cf. Krause (1811), XXVII, 110: 'It is the only task of life, the purely spiritual, the purely physical, and the human: to form the Ur-essential (*Urwesentliche*), the general and the eternal in essential unity (*wesentlicher Einheit*); in the finite, individual and temporal.' Although Krause had a strict Christian education, his philosophy did not presuppose a specific Christian doctrine of *Imago Dei*. The reason is twofold. On the one hand, Krause presupposed that fundamental philosophical insights concerning the nature of humanity were already discovered in the Indian traditions, and could be gained independently from any kind of revelation. On the other, Krause rejected anthropocentric thinking. According to Krause, ultimately, the whole world and every finite entity is, in varying degrees, an image of God. Instead of an anthropocentric paradigm, Krause was in favour of what Dierksmeier calls an anthropo-relational account of the human being and its environment. Cf. Dierksmeier (2003), Dierksmeier (2022), and Birnbacher (2022).

18. Krause understands the concept of humanity, humankind, as ‘the multi-faceted and consistent completion of the whole person and the whole of humanity’ (Krause (1820), lii).

19. See Krause (1836), 336: ‘The archetypes represent what really *should* be lived. And by means of them, those conceptual images (*Begriffbilder*) come about that refer to the model concept (*Musterbegriff*) of something-to-be-realized (*eines Zu-Verwirklichenden*) in accordance with the idea. They may therefore be called “model images” (*Musterbilder*).’

20. Cf. López-Morrillas (1981), 38:

Humankind, says Krause, shows signs of turning away from its age-old alienation and is beginning to bend its steps toward universal solidarity, based on rational realization of the common dependence of all men and their subordination to God and divine laws. Placed in this context, the word *Urbild* acquires a dual meaning. On the one hand it means *archetype*, an original pattern; but on the other it has the same meaning as *teleotype*, the final form to be assumed by human solidarity.

21. Krause (1891, 225) describes the predecessors of the idea of the Human League as follows: ‘The ancestral experiments of the Human League have always emanated from scientists and goddesses inspired by Science. So: Pythagoras, Plato, Essener, Jesus, Culdeer, Val. Andrea, Jordanus Bruno, Comenius, Leibniz (see his *Inedita*), Desaguliers, Anderson, Herder, Fessler.’ Krause claimed originality for the idea of the Human League, which he conceived and made concrete: ‘The idea of the Human League was first proclaimed by me, as an intrinsic result of my Scientific System. And I had no inkling or knowledge of this idea either from oral or from written communication, borrowed neither from an open nor from a secret society’ (Krause (1843), 472). For a more thoroughgoing analysis of the influence of Freemasonry on Krause’s thinking, which, contrary to Krause’s statements, was probably greater than he admitted in later years, see Horn (1985).

22. Humankind includes not only the living, but also past and future generations of humankind, because ‘all people in all times and countries, from Adam onwards, belong to the one great whole of humankind’ (Krause (1900), 4).

23. See also Dierksmeier (2016), 139:

According to Krause, however, one may neither obtain nor forfeit the recognition of human dignity. The fundamental right of all human beings to be recognized as moral rational beings is, therefore, not based on reciprocity of factual recognition, which is always conditional. Rather, the unconditional right to be respected as a rational being establishes an absolute legal obligation for universal recognition.

For the current discussion, which Krause was already on to in 1811, cf. Benhabib (2016), 33.

24. For Krause, it was therefore obvious that there is absolute equality of man and woman. Cf. Krause (1900), 474:

Denying the woman science, saying: she is not intended for science, means as much as similarly: she should only have a body, no head. Man and woman [are] in all respects of the same essence, in terms of limb structure, of the same essence, of the same essential, peculiar excellence.

25. Cf. Reinhardt (2021), 91. See also Cavallar (2003), 182: ‘Krause is a cosmopolitan who thinks in global dimensions. His political cosmopolitanism is based on natural law, which leads to the idea of a global legal league.’ See also Cavallar (2003), 183: ‘Krause’s political cosmopolitanism (the idea of a politico-legal union of all peoples) is based on an ethical cosmopolitanism, namely, the traditional one Idea of the *societas humani generis*.’

26. Krause (1873), 14, *passim*:

Q: But what is the main internal work and overall work of the Human League? A: The independent and social (absolute and synthetic, or harmonious) purification, ennoblement, and new formation and completion (full development) of all subordinate societies in humanity, in accordance with the idea (the ought concept (*Sollbegriffe*)) as a complete, all-over-coherent (*allübereinstimmigen*), healthy, powerful and beautiful elemental-structure. In this way, every human being, and every human society, exists and essentially lives (*wesenlebet*) in, through, and with, the whole, in and for itself. And all only determine themselves through mutual change, free themselves through mutual change, guide themselves by mutual change, educate themselves by change, and reinforce each other through change, only for the Good (*und sich alle nur zum Guten wechselbestimmen, wechselbefreien, wechselanleiten, wechselbilden und wechselbekräftigen*). So, finally, all essential-selves (persons) (*Selbwesen (Personen)*) in humanity are mature as in one essential-self (*als in Einem Selbwesen*), so that no one patronizes the other. But each one is connected with everyone, and everyone with each one, in God-like freedom, to present the one Good as the everything-like (*allartigen*) Good, to the presentation of the one, same, whole, God-like and God-unified essential life (*gottvereinten Wesenlebens*) of humankind.

27. Cf. Nussbaum (1997), (1999), (2000), (2010), (2016), and (2020).

28. All human beings are called to participate historically in the realization of the Human League: 'The human race must [. . .] grow little by little, spread over the whole earth, freely form all individual capacities and bring them to high excellence. The peoples must [. . .] form themselves independently. Then they will fight evil (*Uebel*) freely' (Krause (1900), 4).

29. However, Krause seems to assume that 'where human rights are scorned and ridiculed, revolutions will strike like storm clouds' (Krause quoted in Wollgast (1990), 89).

30. For Krause, this does not rule out the possibility that some cultures are called upon to be teachers of other cultures:

Mature peoples are called to educate underage, childlike, peoples. But they have to educate themselves. And this education has to be: with love, with understanding, sensory (*sinniger*) and beautiful art, not selfish, but with the conscious intention of guiding all steps of development, to make the people's pupils (*Völker-Zöglinge*) mature, to make them equal, or even more beautiful and full of life than they are. (Krause (1900), 48)

On the accusation of Eurocentrism for such a position, cf. Benhabib (2016), 189.

31. See also Krause (1900), 31:

As the highest society, the Human League does not disturb the freedom of any social institution. It allows everybody, as well as each single person, to develop freely. [. . .] In this way, the nascent Human League avoids the accusation of wishing to patronize humankind. For, it first wishes to come of age itself, and is never hasty, outwardly interfering, or disruptive. It works only internally, with the whole inner consistent power of the whole perfecting human being.

32. See also Dierksmeier (2020), 231:

Krause in no way wishes to level the diversity of civilizations in that envisioned global federation of law, but rather especially aims to protect cultural diversity through the progress of cosmopolitan law. While, in a legally unregulated world, the economic and military powers of the day can raze traditional cultures as they please, weaker civilizations have much better chances for the preservation of their lifestyles in well-ordered bodies of cosmopolitan law. In other words, precisely because, for Krause, the earth belongs to all people and peoples for the realization of their individual freedom, the lifestyles of cultures may also manifest themselves in dissimilar ways.

In the current debate, Held (2010, 76) also represents this point of view, which Krause had already presented in 1811: 'It is important to stress that cosmopolitan philosophy does not deny the reality and ethical relevance of living in a world of diverse values and identities – how could it? It does not assume that unanimity is attainable on all practical-political questions.'

33. On the historical and current interweaving of social conditions see Krause (1820), xxiv: 'Each individual society [is] simultaneously dependent on the early and simultaneous state of all other *institutions* (*Institute*) existing alongside it, and ultimately on the state of human life as a whole.'

34. Cf. Krause (1843), 277–278:

What was good for an earlier fulfilled life (Lebensvollzeit), what is essential for an earlier period of life (was einem frühern Lebensalter), becomes inappropriate for life as a result of development, as soon as the purpose of the earlier period is satisfied. Consequently it cannot and should not continue in life. And on the other hand: What was not yet required in the earlier period of life according to their idea and could not yet be achieved in it, that is now essential for the next period of life according to the new idea, required and has become possible to live. Therefore, in the future, with a new age and with a new full-time life, the new power comes into play to realize those ideas from now on, by which the intrinsic essence of this new life time is determined. If this thought is thought in its entirety, in its relation to the whole of life, then the very general and all-encompassing, general and universal, authority also results: to reshape and reshape the whole of life steadily, artistically, according to the progress of the development of the organism of ideas in time.

Cf. also Krause (1811), 4: science 'should recognize and love the good and beautiful, of the past and the present. It teaches how what is traditionally good and beautiful in itself may be freely and artistically redesigned and educated according to the spirit of the present for the near future.'

35. See Krause (1820), xi. See also Schneider (1907), 36.

36. Cf. Krause (1848), 7:

[T]he individual human being and human society stand in essential union and indissoluble interaction. The individual receives a large part of their intellectual formation from society. Their whole mental life is determined, maintained, sustained, promoted, and hindered, by their social circumstances. Conversely, however,

the individual human being, as an individual soul, has in turn a powerful and intimate effect on the soul life (*Seelenleben*) of entire societies. Yes: If the individual succeeds in bringing a fundamental idea (*grundwesentliche Idee*) into their individual consciousness and teaches this with clarity to humankind, it can happen that the single individual spirit determines the spirit of all humankind, and stimulates it to higher life.

37. What Höffe (2016, 262) says about Kant's world republic also applies to Krause's Human League:

The world republic is not an enthusiastic utopia of fundamentally nowhere (*schwärmerische Utopie des grundsätzlichen Nirgendwo*). Rational law (*Rechtsvernunft*) does not give itself up to dreams that distort reality, to personal or collective illusions. What it demands, a World-State with a democratic constitution, a secondary state world republic, is something else: a utopia of the *not-yet*, a political ideal that we are already on the way to realizing.

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