

Lawrence Krader's Development of Noetics

By

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The Development of Noetics

The following material provides a brief overview of Krader's development of Noetics.

1 Noetics: Investigating Human Thought and Knowledge

Lawrence Krader's scope of research was an interdisciplinary approach – philosophical, anthropological, sociological, historical and ethnological – with regard to investigating the complex interrelation of nature and of culture, and of human being, society and person. In his magnum opus, *Noetics* (2010), which he began in 1937 while still an undergraduate majoring in philosophy at the City College of New York, Krader investigated one of the central questions of the philosophy of science: What is human thinking and knowing, thought and knowledge – what are the tenets of a science of noetics and how do they relate to human emotion, desire, will, intuition, teleology, as well as to human as subject-object, and to self-knowledge. Krader argues that the discovery of the quantum realm was revolutionary in that it showed that nature was not continuous, homogeneous, solely material, absolute, universal and in this sense law-like, but that the quantum realm was a different order of nature from that of the material universe. This discovery enabled Krader to represent the human order of nature as yet a third order distinct from both the material and the quantum order. Much of noetic science deals with the nature of the human order and its interrelations with the material order. In *Noetics*, the assertion that man is both *Homo sapiens* and human being existing within the material and human orders of nature is made, and it is argued that human knowledge is not only the result of mental operations of thinking and of rational acts, but it is also acquired in daily routines with subjective, self-evident insights, emotions, feelings and values, consciously and unconsciously. *Noetics* brings our attention to the relation of thinking and knowing in conjunction with emotions, feelings and judgments, thereby examining the processes of abstraction and of objectivation as unique features of human existence. Krader links up with the millennial old tradition of considering humans as social animals, who participate in rational processes of thinking in connection with sense perception, intuitions, judgments, etc. The science of noetics starts with the premise that the mind is embodied and that the human body participates in all forms of mentalization. In this way, noetics necessarily is allied with the field of aesthetics.

2 Nature

For Krader all is in nature and nature is all. But, as we have seen, nature is not one continuous, homogeneous order. The significance of the quantum universe concerns nothing less than the existence within nature of (at least) two different orders of space-time, the one of the material universe and the other of the quantum, both orders of nature, but neither are reducible to the other. This breakthrough in the theory of nature provides Krader with a justification to posit yet a third order of nature, the human order, which stands in a direct relation to material nature insofar as human being is material-biotic as *Homo sapiens* and in a mediate relation to both material nature and the quantum order from within the space and time of the

human order. The outline of the three orders of nature – potentially n-orders – provides a new framework for taking up centuries of discussion and debate in metaphysics, ontology and epistemology, the social and human sciences, physics, astronomy, and the philosophy of science more generally. Many of the problems and positions taken up by the great thinkers of the past – such as the mind-body question, Aristotle’s distinction of generation and constitution, Cartesian dualism, Kant’s *phenomenon* and *noumenon*, Spinoza’s monism, Hegel’s understanding of mind and nature, Durkheim’s development of sociology as a natural science, the materialism debate in neuroscience, and many others – can now be understood in a new light: Krader has posited a radically new understanding of nature as encompassing different orders of space-time, which cannot be brought into one homogenous system. From this standpoint of continuity-discontinuity of nature and of the same in relation to the human order, follows the necessity to investigate culture.

3 Culture – The Human Order of Nature

Krader interpreted culture as a major element within the human order of nature; whereas the material order is wholly concrete, the human order is both concrete and abstract; whereas the material order is thingly, the human order is both objective and subjective. When Karl Marx proclaimed in relation to Darwin’s *Origin of Species* that there is no teleology in nature, he was wrong. There is teleology, but only in the human order of nature. There is no purpose in the material order of nature save as a human projection. In the material order there are evolutionary changes as an aspect of material process; within the human order there is development in the course of human history. Culture exists in a mediate relation to the material order of nature on the one hand and in a mediate and immediate relation in society. From within the material order *Homo sapiens* as a material-biotic being exists in direct-indirect relations to the rest of material nature. The mediate-immediate dyad interrelates with the object-subject: it is characterized by objectivation, objectification, the generation of meaning, purpose, conscious reflection as well as unconscious motivation. This calls to mind Hegel’s famous saying penned in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: “Der Mensch...geht...vermittelnd zu Werke” [“Man...goes...to work in a mediating way”]. In the context of his exploration of the human order of nature Krader also focuses on several cultural expressions of human thought and knowledge, such as language, art, myth, rites, magic practices, fetishism, or religion – which brings his culture theory and anthropology into connection with Ernst Cassirer’s concept of a PHILOSOPHY OF SYMBOLIC FORMS (vol. 1-3: 1923, 1925 and 1929 respectively; English translation 1953, 1955, 1957 respectively) or Susan K. Langer’s PHILOSOPHY IN A NEW KEY (1942: German translation 1965).

4 Language

Krader suggests that we can only approach human being or human nature in general through the study of particular cultures, that is, that humanity in general can only be understood as an abstraction from particular cultures. Within the framework of human being as

participating in both the material order of nature (*Homo sapiens*) as well as in the human order (Human Being), Krader investigates language anthropologically with regard to the relation between concrete, empirical culture and the abstractly human, a problem already taken up in the tradition of Wilhelm von Humboldt's concept of language as *energeia* rather than *ergos*, which implies a dynamic concept of human culture as a specific expression of the human spirit. From this point of view, Krader stands squarely within the Humboldt tradition and opposed to the formalism of Chomsky, Pinker and others whose universal grammar is to be found in the material order of nature. Yet, for Krader, this relation between the human spirit and its expression in particular cultures is reversed: for the human spirit as such has no actuality, only a potentiality which can only be actualized through the development, transitions, conflicts and co-operation within, between, and among existing empirical cultures.

5 *Aesthetics and Arts*

Krader investigates the interrelations of epistemology and aesthetics as well as of sociology and aesthetics and brings his deep knowledge and appreciation of literature, poetry, music, painting and sculpture to bear in relation to thinking and self-knowledge. In line with the most recent thinking in neuroscience, Krader argues that noetics cannot treat thinking and knowing, thought and knowledge in abstraction but must consider them in relation to perception, sensations, feeling and judgment. Self-knowledge is a special case of knowledge – for here the subject and the object of reflection are identical – the subject is not able to relate to itself as a separate, external object. We only become mindful of self when we are able to adopt an observer position outside of ourselves, i.e. when self-relating from an extrinsic perspective. According to Krader the fictional figures of antique theatre and modern literature symbolize what is possible and represent forms of self-relation, hidden behind a mask, related to the fact that social actors are role players. What Krader has to offer here is a link between the field of aesthetics and sociology, which is until today a forgotten field of research, but has been taken up by Georg Simmel in his famous essays about the SOCIOLOGY OF AESTHETICS and SOCIOLOGY OF THE SENSES.

6 *Human Being, the Self and Society*

The human being is neither a mere biotic being, nor able to transcend a bodily, biological existence as human being participating in both orders, the material as well as the human. This approach can be harmonized with Ernst Cassirer's idea of man as *animal symbolicum* and Susan K. Langer's approach to human cultural existence. Krader's work also stands in close relation to the tradition in social science and philosophy that includes the pragmatism of Charles S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey (with whom Krader had been in contact), the social behaviorism of George Herbert Mead, the social idealism of Charles Horton Cooley, and the long philosophical tradition which has grasped the social nature of human being as foundational. The self and self-consciousness can only be understood thus to be generated

in social interaction in relation to others, whereby self-consciousness is wholly constituted within the human order of nature.

Krader's new standpoint of the several orders of nature leads to a central question of the conference, which is: How do these different orders of nature relate to each other? In order to investigate this relation, which remains an open question in Krader's published and unpublished writings, the conference takes under consideration Krader's concepts of human being and society, his theory of self and person, of emotion, desire and will as well as his reflections on language, science and art.

Citations from *Noetics* (2010) and other works

The interrelation of nature and the human order

Krader describes the interrelation between nature and the human order in several ways:

"The human kind is constituted as a part of nature, and generates an order thereof, with many asymmetrical and paradoxal relations. We have mediate relations to ourselves and to external nature, whereas the relations of nature are direct, practical and concrete; those of the human kind, being and order are practical and theoretical, concrete and abstract. Abstractly, metaphorically and theoretically, we form the center of our subjective world and our science, whereas no center, practical or concrete, exists in nature of which we are a part; the only natural center is depicted as a figurative one, but our noetic concretion, not center, is real. The relation between the reality of a trope and reality on analysis constitutes an object of our science. We form our own center, in metaphoric figures, but do neither project nor impose it on external nature. Only through ontological and epistemological speculation does the fantasy that the world turns around human beings exist".

As natural beings, all our relations are direct and concrete; as human beings our relations are mediate, abstract and concrete. We form part of a world that is external and internal to us, greater than we and our works; this concept leads to further paradoxes; thus we take up a perspective from without, although we are within; a perspective of the greater, although we are lesser; a perspective of the part among other parts *ad infinitum*; these paradoxes and asymmetries are all shaped into objects of noetics. Nature is the same as being in space and time, and all of our mental processes are in space and time. There are many different systems of space and time including the *Space—Time* system of the cosmos, and the space and time of the human order; there are other parts of nature beside these, some of which are systematic, and some that are not".

"Many apparent paradoxes and asymmetries of noetics are resolved by making distinctions between generation and constitution. We are generated out of nature's material order of na-

ture in a process of evolution, procreation, daily material renewal, and sustenance. Once we are generated, we constitute the human kind, being and order of nature which is at once continuous with and dirempted from matter in general, and living matter in particular; the evolution of Homo sapiens substantiates the continuity between all living species, but the human kind and the species Homo sapiens are not the same. Homo sapiens evolve in the common descent of life, as part of nature's material order".

"The relations of nature are thingly and direct, being *Space—Time* relations, and comprise the human relations within them; these in turn are spatio-temporal, being natural and direct in all respects. Human relations constitute another order of nature, other than the material that from the standpoint of the human kind are mediate, objective, and subjective. All relations of nature are changing and changed, none being fixed or absolute, but relative. Some of these changes are without nexus to other natural events, some have difference and nexus between events, things, relations and processes of nature, that are systematic. I distinguish between evolution, which is a kind of natural change that is systematic and sustained over long periods of time in but one direction, and human development, which is a variation on the natural process of change, being systematic, unsystematic, and having not one but many directions, two of them being toward simplicity and complexity, which comprises within it generalization by simple and complex abstraction. Moreover, the distinction, which has an ancient provenience, is made between generation and constitution, and between human development and evolution, which has a modern one; all have become powerful concepts, providing a basis for the science of noetics; they are not part of that science, but provide part of its presuppositions, offering an orderly basis from which to begin. Noetics proceeds from the acknowledgment of order and disorder in its object. These matters are discussed in terms of the paradox that their consideration produces". (*Noetics*. p. 1–3.)

The important and intrinsic connection of Aesthetics to Noetics

Krader explains the important and intrinsic connection of Aesthetics to Noetics in the following way:

"The self as mask in the theatre, religious rite and myth, philosophy and the law was internalized, but the path of internalization was then traced, appearing as a representation, which is two-way, from without inward, and from within outward; the consciousness was then represented as a reflexion or doubling back, as we observe the fox to do, and as an accompaniment of external reality". (*Noetics*. p. 478.)

"To thinking and knowing we add the acts of feeling, and they are together classed as mental acts. Expressed in poetry, they are relations between human beings represented by personae; for we are too complex to recognize and talk about ourselves otherwise. They are relations of

individual human beings; the extreme of individuation of the human being is reached in *poiesis*, of which one kind is intellection; individuation is not anti-social but social, both in its generation and in its effects. There is a moment, however, in which it is outside society, and outside the *Space—Time* of the material world, but exists in the space and time of the human world. The allusion to this moment is recurrent in Goethe's poetry. This moment is present in the individual who creates a poem, a painting, a mathematical equation, a physical theory, a musical composition, and it is social, being generated in the relation between the reader, viewer, auditor, the artist, scientist and the work constituting the medium between the different sides in this process of aesthetics and noetics".

"*Aisthesis* is meant the intake of data through the senses; to this the human kind couples the act of perception, combining sense data with the perceived, which is then turned inward. In another meaning, we relate the acts of sense perception to feelings and judgments of pleasure and pain. We feel the need for the use of the senses, gratification of our need for sense experience, and pain at being deprived of the senses and pleasure at their use. We feel tense and threatened by danger, and relaxation or pleasure that the danger is past. But also rhythms, tones, meanings and interplay of meanings, contrasts of perspective, light and dark, motion and rest, body, color, locus and situs, and change from one state to another afford pleasure to the eye, ear, and body. *Aisthesis* is thus related to and built upon feelings, which are local and general, pertaining to pleasure and pain, and to sensations, which are acts of particular body organs; it is both a field of operation that our organism undertakes, a field of particular organs, as the eye, and an act that then is combined with others by our mental processes, and in our mental states. We take pleasure in the play of rhythms, harmonies, and multiple meanings in a line of poetry, or in a word, the metaphor and anti-metaphor, in a musical composition and painting, all being noetic and aesthetic acts. Feelings, as mental pleasure and pain, are sharp or crude and in either case nonlocal, thus contrasting with physical pleasure and pain, which are in some cases local, in others not localized; *aisthesis* is local, through the sense perceptions. The aesthetic judgment is non-separate from the sensation and perception".

"Through noesis, in a complex of processes, we acquire data and *facta* concerning external nature, the human world, and the world that is internal to us, organize them, and give them meaning. In these processes, *aisthesis* and noesis are separated from one another only by an artifice; they are concretely interrelated, and divided *in abstracto*; the abstraction and division are anti-organismic, and horrifies the romantic, who calls for their non-separation. By sense perception in interaction with intellection we may gain some degree and some kind of control over the data of the world around and in us; the control is objective or spurious; the organization of the thoughts and knowledge, data and *facta* comes from the internal and external factors of our noesis in their combination and division. Sense perception builds upon sensations, not on feelings, making them more local and particular, as *aisthesis* builds upon sensations and feelings; we shall treat chiefly of *aisthesis* in relation to sense perceptions".

“Music, poetry and the visual arts form at once aesthetic and noetic processes and products, for the pleasure that they give us comes from their expressions that we take in through our organs of sensation; these expressions and our reception thereof being interactive with the thoughts, knowledge, feelings and memory of the artist and the spectator or auditor. There is noticeably less of an intellectual element in the pleasure that comes to us through the olfactory, gustatory and tactile sensations; kinesthetic pleasure is taken up in the dance, and in the dance element in athletics...”. (*Noetics*. p. 555-557.)

“Mind, noesis and consciousness are both process and state; this duality is distinguished from the duality of light which is represented as a wave, and a particle. The mental dualities are abstract and concrete, objective and subjective, mediate and immediate. The material and quantum dualities of light are concrete, *dinghaft*, or thingly, and direct in their processes and states. The dualities have different meanings. The subject is transformed into the object, and the object into the subject in noetic processes; they do not disappear by this transformation, but are constructed into the self. The substitution of the one for the other, and of the other for the one is pursued in acts of intellection, language, art, in the human world alone...”. (*Noetics*. p. 83-84.)

Krader on human nature in general and in particular; empirical and philosophical anthropology

“The expression of the nature and identity of mankind in the abstract, however clear it may be as a concept, is neither well thought out nor fully explored; hence it is at once the triumph and defeat of speculative and empirical anthropology. To be human is to participate in mankind in general, and to participate in a particular culture; it is the latter which is known best. Objectively, the individual achieves his human nature only through the channel of the particular culture, not through that of mankind in general; in this sense we speak of particular human nature. The unity and uniqueness of mankind as the culture bearer, while having gained formal expression, has been given little substantial content. Moreover, the concept of the abstract concept, the totality as unity, has few consequences in relations between peoples and between social classes. The individual identity of man is engendered by the expression of his being of his own kind as opposed to the being of those other nations and classes, and as opposed eventually to the being of *the* other; this mode of achieving identity is counterposed to the concept of the unity of man, and the unity of the separate human group with mankind as a whole...The conditions which have made possible the concept of mankind as an abstract unitary, objective totality, impede the realization of the concept”. (*Primary Reification and Primitive Mythology*. p. 51-52.)

“In primitive society, on the other hand, the concept of man in general is frequently lacking, or incompletely conceived and expressed; man, the category of genuine man, will then refer

to the members of the speaker's social group, to people of like language or culture, and the further extension of the notion is vague, even possibly including only some members of the group or language community, excluding others, stopping short of its outer limits, which are therefore not considered to be an absolute unity by its members. As a consequence, some members of the same people (conceived as an absolute ethnic unity by civilized men, the anthropologists) may be treated as outsiders, as others, albeit not as a thing or as something other than human, subhuman. In primitive circumstances, the expression of the identity of man is not conceived in the abstract as mankind, self-conscious social man, man as a member of the human kind in general. On the contrary, the conscious awareness of the primitive society in question is barely developed, and therefore its identity is weakly expressed, while the identity of other men, man outside one's own social group, man in others societies, the *other* (man and society), and mankind as a whole, may not be given expression at all. Within primitive society, oppositions between own and other, between man and man, man and society, group and group (as a whole society and part of a society), and next between man and nature, are poorly developed and expressed. There is no thought of contradictions within primitive society as these are conceived abstractly by civilized man; these may only be discovered *post hoc* by civilized man, who is in fully contradictory relations himself, and then traced back to their roots in primitive society, or by primitives who are so no longer, having come into contact with civilized societies". (*Primary Reification and Primitive Mythology*. p. 52-53.)

Krader on society and self-consciousness

"Self-consciousness is conceived as a fundamental noetic process, but not the only one, being paired with consciousness of the other; the other, being human, is conscious of the one, and of the self in a reciprocal relation. The consciousness of the human one, other, many ones and others is presupposed; the monadic consciousness of self is solipsistic; the individual consciousness does not exist *solus ipse* but only in relation to others, of others and of self". (*Noetics*. p. 102.)

"Without relations in the society of our parents, wider circles of kin, friends, and colleagues we do not develop the ability to speak, think, represent, understand, reason, organize our knowledge; learning is social learning. The human individuals then develop the capacity to form and differentiate the self out of these processes". (*Noetics*. p. 438-439.)

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