CALL FOR PAPERS

The General and the Particular in the Contemporary World

Philosophical, Anthropological, Theological, Aesthetic, Linguistic and Political-Economic Implications

An interdisciplinary, international conference entitled The General and the Particular in the Contemporary World: Philosophical, Anthropological, Theological, Aesthetic, Linguistic and Political-Economic Implications will be held at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario on May 8th and 9th of 2020.

This is the second conference dealing with topics taken up by the late Professor Lawrence Krader (1919-1998), philosopher and anthropologist, and former Director of the Institut für Ethnologie at the Freie Universität zu Berlin in Germany. The first conference was held in 2016 at McMaster University and the Workers Art and Heritage Centre in Hamilton, Ontario, where also the Lawrence Krader Archive is located (Mills Library, McMaster Campus). For more details see the most recent publication, edited by Cyril Levitt and Sabine Sander: Beyond the Juxtaposition of Nature and Culture (New York 2018).

This conference focused largely on the implications of Krader’s magnum opus Noetics. The Science of Thinking and Knowing (published posthumously in 2010, edited by Cyril Levitt) and included appreciations of his work on myths in his earlier anthropological writings. The second conference has a more direct focus. It concerns changing structures and values which had been established in the aftermath of the Second World War. At the heart of these changes lie questions of universalism and particularism, globalism and nationalism, free trade and protectionism, international alliances and national aspirations, multiculturalism and ethnic, religious and racial particularism, diplomacy and belligerency, issues of gender binary coherence and gender fluidity, cultural, ethnic, racial, gender appropriation, civil liberties and political correctness, the role of religion in public life etc.
Krader has taken up the universal (he preferred the word “general”) and the particular in relation to the question of human history and development as contained in the following citation from Noetics:

The difficulty in conceiving of saltation in theory arises both in taking up inter-relations of order and randomness in the theory of nature and in uncritically and speculatively considering unity and the One in human history. The party of humanity, the church universal and the world revolutions are expressions of such speculative unity; one of the products of this speculative expression is the idea of a world history from the standpoint of a world citizen. We can conceive of a world standpoint, party, church, revolution and citizenship in the imagination, in speculation and in abstracto, but concrete issues arise out of particular experiences, problems, and solutions, leading in these and other directions. To be sure, history bears not only on the concrete particular; in general problems of the humankind are also concrete, and by considering them critically we go beyond our individual and particular formations. But the general is concrete only in the particular and not concrete in the general, either in human history or in natural history. The human particular is sifted through the worldwide or the local perspectives, and this is critically treated.


And in a much earlier study of primitive myth, Krader not only took up the question of humankind in general in relation to particular cultures, but he went further by suggesting that treating abstractions of humanity as though they were concrete realities actually impedes the further development of the humankind in the direction of what philosophers have sometimes called the concrete universal:

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 or her nature only through the channel of the particular culture, not through the mankind in general; in this sense we speak of particular human nature. The unity and uniqueness of mankind as the cultural 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 apposed to being of those other nations and classes, and as opposed eventually to the being of the other; this mode of achieving identity is counter-posed 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 and totality, impede the realization of the concept.

In the second conference we take up the challenge posed by him regarding the general and the particular in the development of the humankind. We invite scholars in all fields whose work can address one or both of Krader’s above mentioned statements – or other texts of Krader – to respond to this call for papers.

We will invite a number of applicants to participate in the conference, based upon their abstracts (200-300 words in length), and upon their scholarly work as evidenced in their short bio or CV. Successful applicants will be notified by email at the end of January 2020. The Lawrence Krader Research Project will cover all travel costs, room and board for the invited scholars.

Please submit your abstract and CV or short bio by the middle of January 2020 to (one of) the following members of the Lawrence Krader Research Project:

Prof. Rob Beamish: rob.beamish@queensu.ca
Prof. Dr. Cyril Levitt: levittc@mcmaster.ca
Dr. Sabine Sander: sandest@mcmaster.ca