

**Seminar in Metaphysics**  
**PHIL 8600**  
Syllabus  
Fall, 2007

Professor Edward Halper  
Office: Peabody Hall #128  
Hours: 2:30–3:15 M, F  
Other times by appointment  
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**Description and Objective:** The theme of this seminar is the categories. Categories are a division of being or reality. Dividing reality into categories is problematic because, first, it raises the question whether reality is something over and above the division and, if not, how a division is possible. Then, too, a division of reality presupposes some notion of what reality is, or is not, and we can expect philosophers with divergent views of reality to propound divergent categorial schemes. More significantly, there are certain problems that cut across these divisions and apply to all who propose categorial schemes. One of the problems is how to divide the categories from each other. It is problematic whether or not the dividing character, the differentia, falls within the category. Another problem is the independence of categories from each other. There are, it seems, some categories (such as numbers) that are present in others. Still another problem is what we can call categorial individuation, what counts as an individual instance of a category. These problems arise, in part, because categorial schemes are not generally aligned with independent existents, but work, as it were, in a different dimension. Categorial schemes are always closely associated with scientific investigations. Aristotle's *Categories* is the first work of this Organon, the logic tool that he develops for scientific investigation. And contemporary treatments of categories are connected with views of science, albeit quite different views.

We begin with the seminal work on the subject, Aristotle's *Categories*, and we will follow it with two ancient critiques, Porphyry's *Isagoge*, and Plotinus' *Ennead* VI.1-3. A central focus of the course will be a contemporary treatment that claims to be Aristotelian, E. J. Lowe's *Four Category Ontology*. The course will conclude with a continental treatment, Ernst Cassirer's *Substance and Function*. Hence, we will be concerned with both Analytic and Continental thinkers. We will be looking for common ground in the problems and the range of solutions that they open up.

Each student will be responsible for three seminar presentations and a major paper. A seminar presentation could serve as the basis for the paper, but the paper is expected to be substantial.

**Texts:** Aristotle, *Categories*  
Porphyry, *Isagoge*  
Plotinus, *Ennead* 6.1-3  
E. J. Lowe, *The Four-Category Ontology*  
Ernst Cassirer, *Substance and Function*

<b>Grading:</b> Presentations	40%
Course Paper	60%