THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
AND THE CENTER FOR LANGUAGE SCIENCES
PRESENT

A THEORY OF KINDS FOR GENERICS?

BERNHARD NICKEL
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Dewey 2-110E
Friday, April 12th 2:00-5:00 PM
(Talk: 2-3PM, Responses and discussion: 3-5PM)
Reception to follow in Lattimore 501

GENERIC SENTENCES SUCH AS *RAVENS ARE BLACK* OR *TIGERS HAVE STRIPES* SEEM TO CHARACTERIZE KINDS OR TO CONVEY INFORMATION ABOUT MEMBERS OF KINDS *QUA* MEMBERS OF KINDS. WHILE MOST SEMANTIC THEORIES BEGIN WITH THIS OBSERVATION, NONE RETURN TO IT TO EXPLAIN HOW THE PROFFERED SEMANTICS ILLUMINATES THIS INTUITIVE OBSERVATION.

I ARGUE THAT MAKING GOOD ON THE INTUITION IS, IN FACT, VERY DIFFICULT. I ARGUE THAT NEITHER PROMINENT METAPHYSICAL THEORIES OF KINDS, SUCH AS THOSE OF ARMSTRONG, LEWIS, OR SIDER, NOR PROMINENT EPISTEMIC THEORIES THAT FOCUS ON INDUCTION AND PREDICTION SUCH AS THE HOMEOSTATIC PROPERTY CLUSTER VIEW OF KINDS FIT WITH GENERICS. I END BY SUGGESTING SOME PATHS FOR THINKING ABOUT KINDS THAT FOCUS ON OTHER EPISTEMIC GOALS THAN INDUCTION AND PREDICTION, AND WHICH MAY FIT BETTER WITH OUR USAGE OF GENERICS.

RESPONSES BY
ZEYNEP SOYSAL & JENS KIPPER
PHILOSOPHY

ASH ASUDEH & SCOTT GRIMM
LINGUISTICS