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**Abstract:** Peirce's early essay 'On a New List of Categories' has been claimed to be essential reading for those who would understand his philosophy, even that it is the 'keystone' of his 'system'. I argue that the essay is critical to the evolution of his thought but that reading it is not essential to understanding his other writings; in fact, his later writings contradict it. Peirce's own claim that this essay contains his 'one contribution to philosophy' has been misunderstood.

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