The problem of universals – a central one in medieval philosophy – seems somehow to disappear from the main philosophical agenda in the early modern period. Actually some assumptions and solutions coming from that tradition still work in the ontological background of modern philosophers, this legacy being the more influential as it remains to a large extent implicit, or is sometimes apparently taken for granted.

Moreover, the (partly hidden, partly apparent) continuity of the problem is accompanied by a reshaping of its framework, due to the transformation of the general philosophical approach. Thus, the epistemic turn typical of post-Cartesian thought and the rise of a new scientific paradigm determine a corresponding translation of the ancient debate into a new conceptual language, and shift the focus onto different aspects.

All this makes it the more interesting to explore early modern thought from this relatively unfamiliar point of view, in order to assess this mix of continuity and innovation. Between the medieval golden age of the problem and its revival in present-day metaphysics, the period from Hobbes to Kant represents an indispensable bridge to be crossed, in order to critically improve our reception of this ancient problem, and try to get a comprehensive historical and conceptual understanding of this whole philosophical issue.

Scientific committee:
Francesco Del Punta (SNS)
Stefano Di Bella (SNS)
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Monday 7th

h 9.30 Introduction

h 9.45 Cees Leijenhorst (Nijmegen)
*On Hobbes’s Nominalism*

h 10.45 Coffee Break

h 11.15 Antonia Lolordo (Univ. of Virginia)
*Gassendi on Universals*

h 12.30 Lunch

h 15.00 Lawrence Nolan (California State University, Long Beach)
*Descartes on Universal Essences and Divine Knowledge*

h 16.00 Coffee Break

h 16.30 Samuel Newlands (Notre Dame, Indiana)
*Spinoza on Universals*

Tuesday 8th

h 9.00 Tad Schmaltz (Ann Arbor, Michigan)
*Platonism and Conceptualism among the Cartesians*

h 10.00 Coffee Break

h 10.15 Mariangela Priarolo (Siena)
*Universals and Individuals in Malebranche’s Philosophy*

h 11.15 Brunello Lotti (Udine)
*Eternal and immutable rationes rerum: Universals in 17th century English Platonism: More, Cudworth, Norris*

h 12.30 Lunch

h 15.00 Massimo Mugnai (Scuola Normale, Pisa)
*“...catus sum nominalis, saltem per provisionem.” On Leibniz’s Nominalism*

h 16.00 Coffee Break

h 16.15 Martha Bolton (Rutgers, New Brunswick)
*Kinds in Locke’s Essay and Leibniz’s Nouveaux Essays*

Wednesday, 9th

h 9.00 Jonathan Lowe (Durham)
*Locke on General Ideas*

h 10.00 Coffee Break

h 10.15 Tom Stoneham (York)
*Berkeley on Abstractions, Universals and Universal Knowledge*

h 11.15 Donald Baxter (Connecticut)
*Hume on Abstraction and Identity*

h 12.30 Lunch

h 15.00 Marco Sgarbi (Verona)
*Universale in abstracto – Universale in concreto: Logical and Ontological Problems of the Early German Aufklärung*

h 16.00 Coffee Break

h 16.15 Pietro Kobau (Turin)
*Christian Wolff on Universals*