

4TH DONALD RUSSELL MEMORIAL LECTURE



Professor Anne Sheppard

Saying it in Style: Some Uses of Rhetoric by Platonist Philosophers in Late Antiquity

22 October 2026 (Thu. wk. 3 Michaelmas Term), 5 pm

St John's College Garden Quad Auditorium

The philosophers of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries AD were well educated in rhetoric and made good use of what they had learned in the rhetorical schools, both in their commentaries on Plato and in other forms of writing. The first part of the lecture will focus on how Proclus and his contemporary, Hermias of Alexandria, deploy the theory of three styles, as an example of their use of tools drawn from the rhetorical tradition of literary criticism. The second part will consider the influence of rhetoric on the writing of encomia by Synesius and by Proclus' pupil, Marinus, on the composition of hymns by Synesius and Proclus, and on the writing of a Platonic dialogue by Aeneas of Gaza.

Professor Anne Sheppard: Professor Anne Sheppard is Professor Emerita of Ancient Philosophy at Royal Holloway, University of London. She wrote her DPhil on Proclus under the supervision of Donald Russell. Her publications include *Studies on the 5th and 6th essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic* (1980), *Aesthetics. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art* (1987), *Greek and Roman Aesthetics* (with Oleg Bychkov, 2010), *The Poetics of Phantasia. Imagination in Ancient Aesthetics* (2014) and *Plotinus. Ennead I.8. On the Nature and Source of Evil* (2025).

The Donald Russell Memorial Lectures were established by the President and Fellows of St John's College, Oxford, in 2023 to celebrate and honour the contribution of Professor Donald Russell FBA (1920-2020) to the discipline of Classics, and his exceptionally generous support for Classics at St John's. The lectures are dedicated to the fields of Classical studies in which Professor Russell had particular interest, including the art of Greek and Latin prose, rhetoric, and imperial Greek literature.