Memory in Hellenistic Philosophy and Late Antiquity

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In this class we will examine some of the complex ways in which the Platonic and Aristotelian insights into the functioning and role of memory in human cognition and life were received, criticised, transformed and added to in the Hellenistic age and in late antiquity, from the early Epicureans and Stoics (late 4th century BCE) to Augustine (3rd/4th century CE). The texts which we will examine, and the study of memory in this period, raise a number of exegetical and philosophical questions which span a variety of different but interrelated areas, including psychology, epistemology, ethics, and scientific and philosophical method.

There will be opportunities for students to give short presentations in weeks 2 to 8. A set of bibliographies and selected texts will be circulated at the first session in week 1 and made available on Canvas.

Mondays 10-12, Seminar Room, Corpus Christi College

Week 1: Introduction: Pre-Hellenistic Philosophers on Memory (mainly Plato and Aristotle)
Week 2: Epicureans on memory
Week 3: Stoics on memory (and their critics)
Week 4: Rationalist, Empiricist and Methodist doctors on the use of memory in the art of medicine
Week 5: Galen on the physiology and pathologies of memory
Week 6: Plotinus on memory
Week 7: Plotinus on whether the stars have memory
Week 8: Augustine on memory, recollection and forgetting