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Panel 14 « Literature of Knowledge ».

Title : « Ethics, Rhetoric and Anthropology in Theophrastus' *Characters*. »

20 minutes.

Can we consider Theophrastus' *Characters* an ethical book ? This is a controversial question which has elicited many contradictory answers. The *Characters* offer a series of images of human types. This is why they can be defined as an ethical book, and not because they pass judgments on human behaviour or promote ethical laws, which they don't.. The ethical dimension of the *Characters* is connected to the nature of the images they contain. These images are rhetorical artefacts. The purpose of this paper is to study the rhetorical structure of these artefacts, the type of portrayal they offer and the type of knowledge of man that can be derived from them. Thus it will be possible to see why Theophrastus' *Characters* , on account of their ethical and rhetorical nature, belong to the literature of knowledge.