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Preferred panel:

The Powers of Persuasion

Title:

Ancient Greek Cultural Thinking and the Speeches of Isocrates

Length:

15 to 20 minutes

Outline:

The paper is dedicated to the problem of how the Greeks thought of human culture and through what terms were the relevant views and ideas expressed. It examines diverse aspects of Isocrates' concern with human life and illuminates the perspectives through which he considers the organisation and the hierarchies of man's material, social and spiritual world. Through an analysis of some key passages it reveals not only the complex, dynamic character

of cultural ideas and observations, but also a set of often interrelated terms expressing these ideas in spite of the lack of a comprehensive concept equivalent to the modern notion of culture and civilisation. Tying together several points of view on shared and personal *mores*, this account on the problem of cultural studies in Antiquity seeks to set Isocrates' thoughts on Greekness on the background of essential notions of civilized life as expressed in the "Odyssey", tracing particularly the aspect of spatiality and accordingly, the notion of centre and periphery. While the Homeric worldview locates cultural standards "at home" and reinforces them through comparison and imagination, the Athenian intellectual speculates on the possibilities of exchange, transmission and appropriation. Thus the paper explores how these considerations involve ideas of culture not only as a mass of phenomena and basic patterns of human behaviour, but also as a paradigm.