Session III. Literary Metaphors and Ideas

Ben Earley (Freie Universität, Berlin): “Thucydides on Movement and Change in Athenian Politics: The Example of the Sicilian Expedition”

The understanding of movement, change, and transformation has been a central question of historiography ever since Thucydides described the subject of his work as “the greatest kinesis [movement, change, mobilisation] that ever affected the Greeks”. Even in Thucydides’ work, however, the concept of movement is complex and multi-faceted. It remains unclear whether Thucydides saw kinesis as operating in predictable patterns or cycles, if he saw it causally as the origin of monumental changes in political regimes and order in the Greek world, or if he intended to present it as a metaphysical category to characterise events. In sum, is there one single idea of movement in Thucydides and, if so, how should perceptive readers (1.22) understand it? In this paper, I propose to explore this question through an analysis of Hermocrates’ speeches in The History of the Peloponnesian War.