

## Thought in Action: Cicero's Use of Social Theory as a Tool for Social Behavior

The theme of this panel is the manner in which Cicero's active life as statesman dovetails with his more introspective rhetorical, philosophical or epistolary works. We have collected abstracts from active Ciceronian scholars that touch upon how his more private literary, philosophical, and rhetorical endeavors outside of his speeches manifest and advance his public agenda, creatively bringing these two strands of Ciceronian thought and activity together. As we encouraged in our letter soliciting the papers, these contributions do not simply focus on the philosophical or rhetorical opera, and indeed we were happy to find that more than one of the scholars ranged into Cicero's letters. One scholar (Paper #1) presented evidence from Cicero's letter to Lucceius on the way Cicero's self-analysis along with his capacity to map onto his own paradigm that of the exiled Themistocles played a healing role in his thoughts about statecraft, especially his own contribution via his consulship.

Another (Paper #2) explores Cicero's investigation and criticism of the oratory of his day, as evidenced in his *Brutus*. Cicero's assessment of "live performances" in the forum, that scholar argues, goes well beyond the basic information that we have in the ancient rhetorical handbooks. The reason for this is, in part, because Cicero cast a more comprehensive and introspective glance at the speakers of his day, expecting more, in part, because he himself had raised the bar so high.

Another professor (Paper #3) writes a piece central to our panel: Cicero's use of *exempla*, particularly in the dialogues, are less oriented toward accurate representations of historical events than toward serving as avatars of his ideology. The disinterest in the

historical depth of his *exempla* is more reminiscent of oratory or poetry than history, and it shows that Cicero is less interested in portraying a group of like-minded *boni a la* the “Scipionic circle,” and more interested in a set of ideas for structuring contemporary social morality.

Finally, a fine contribution (Paper #4) touches upon Cicero’s conception of the role of the dialogue as a tool structuring social relationships. In particular it considers Cicero’s relationship with Varro, as represented in both his letters and his *Academica*, and addresses “the way of the dialogue,” that is, the particular conventions of the dialogue form that allow it to engage in a coded doublespeak through which a select audience of informed readers may communicate more freely and, if possible, use such texts to engage in significant—and salutary—political action.

In the interest of full disclosure, one of the scholars listed above is from out of the country. At this point, the assumption is that he or she will be coming to CAMWS. That said, however, if the professor were unable to attain funding from his or her home institution, one of the panel organizers would have to read that paper. Each paper will be around 15 minutes in length.