

Ingrid A.R. De Smet, *Cui bono? Some Reflections on the Aims of Teaching Post-Classical Latin*, in *Syntagmatia. Essays on Neo-Latin Literature in Honour of Monique Mund-Dopchie and Gilbert Tournoy*, a cura di Dirk Sacré e Jan Papy, Leuven University Press 2009, (Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia XXVI), p.825-834.

Making the case for the teaching of Neo-Latin (within an ever contracting field of the teaching of Latin – and European languages in general – both at a school and university level) De Smet first goes over the points where its benefits are analogous to those derived from classical Latin. The first is a deepened understanding of the inner mechanisms of language per se, for the production of meaning, etc., and thus the acquisition of a skill in retaining, organizing, and communicating information, highly transferable to many other areas. More specifically, the vocabulary, and patterns of Latin word-formation and grammar will contribute significantly to the acquisition of a variety of modern European languages with similar features (within the Indo-European family), more specifically Romance, but also Germanic languages.

While the teaching of Latin will convey a knowledge of the common roots of European culture, the acquisition of post-classical Latin will give access to a large part of Western culture and thought expressed in Latin (from Thomas Aquinas to Isaac Newton). Furthermore, Neo-Latin is needed to decode post-classical writings not only in Latin, but also in the contemporary vernacular. Few, if any, Early Modern cultural expressions in the vernacular can be fully understood without a contextualization which integrates both linguistic spheres.

As regards the benefits of the acquisition of Latin in itself, it might even be argued (to carry De Smet's argument further) that its inflectional nature and other features (like enclitics) might be a useful matrix for the acquisition of a large array of languages, especially advantageous for speakers of languages with no or very little inflection. Awareness of the variability in word order in Latin (preponderantly Subject-Object-Verb, as opposed to the SVO-order of many modern European languages) might be valuable for the acquisition of any of the majority of the world's SOV-languages. This might be even more valid for Neo-Latin, where the clash between (vernacular) SVO- and (Latin) SOV-order often makes itself felt or is even used as a stylistic device.

Thus, "the combination of a good product and some clever marketing, could turn the teaching of post-classical Latin into a sexy subject, for consenting adults" (p. 834).

Johann Ramminger