

word-order. There is the 'Golden Line' and its variants, which depend on separation of epithet and substantive; this separation also produces effects, perhaps largely unintended, which presage the rhyming 'Leonines' of the Middle Ages, as well as elaborate patterns such as we find in the Pyrrha ode of Horace. All in all, there is plenty of food for discussion.

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The Ordinary Level Latin Examination

General Introduction

C. W. BATY

The Oxford and Cambridge Joint Examination
Board O-level Latin Papers, December 1960

First Review

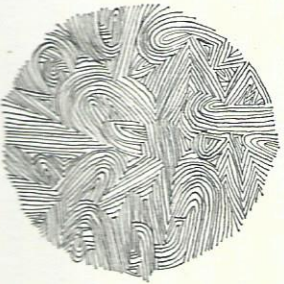
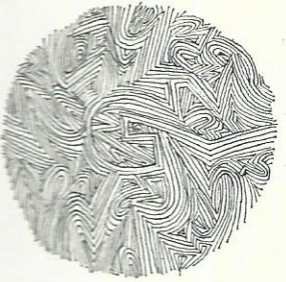
JOHN WILSON

Second Review

B. J. H. and J. S. S.

Reply

R. G. C. LEVENS



Latin at the Ordinary Level

C. W. BATY

For the greater number of secondary-school pupils who learn Latin, the syllabus of the Ordinary-level examination represents either the height of their ambition in Latin or else a standard which, for good reasons or bad, is beyond their reach. For the minority who are destined to go farther, the early stages of their work are generally dominated by Ordinary-level requirements. How far is this examination's influence a healthy one? How far are its demands compatible with such a Latin course as we should really like to have? And, first, how has it come to occupy its dominant place?

Most of the story of the 'First Examination' can be got from the Norwood Report and from subsequent issues of the annual report of the Ministry of Education. Anyone who can remember life in a fifth form of a public school fifty years ago will realise what a confusion of various examinations impeded the school course at that stage, before the School Certificate came to replace them. For that simplification most teachers were so grateful that ever since they have been tempted to forget to see where the unified examination is leading them or whether it has not in fact taken the initiative out of their hands.

From its beginning, as the Norwood Committee reminded us in 1943, the School Certificate examination was designed to reconcile two widely different aims – *res olim dissociabiles*. First, it was to indicate the completion of a general secondary course

before 'advanced' work was begun, and for that purpose the certificate itself originally included the school's statement of its own curriculum; and secondly it was to provide a criterion for admission to universities. In both these aspects the position of the examination is greatly changed: for, whereas it was explicitly intended that the examination should follow the curriculum and not determine it, it came to exercise a remarkably firm influence upon the curriculum of the ever-increasing number of secondary schools; and even in the modified form of the General Certificate Examination (a 'subject' and no longer a 'group' examination) it in fact dictates the syllabus for most teachers and sets the steadily declining standard which must naturally follow, in Latin at any rate, from swollen classes, reduced time-allowance and proportionately fewer well-qualified teachers. There is also the difference that nowadays far more pupils stay on into sixth forms, and so there is less real need of the first examination as proof of the completion of a general education. In fact, it may be hoped that the whole conception of a general education has so changed as to include also an element of 'advanced' work or specialisation. And, in its second function as a condition of entry to certain universities or faculties, the 'First Examination' in Latin is either no longer required or an insufficient qualification where proof of competence in Latin is still needed.

Latin is in a special position. When first the Oxford and Cambridge Joint Board introduced the School Certificate examination in 1905, the standard in Latin was set, and the lines of the examination were guided, by the practice of the boys' public schools and of the older grammar schools, whose pupils formed most of the entry. Most of these candidates had spent from four to six years at preparatory or other private schools, and — as things were then — three or four years at public or grammar schools. They thus had behind them a course of seven or eight years of Latin, with a fairly generous allowance of lessons a week. It was reasonable therefore to expect a firm grounding, after the manner of more leisurely days; and, by the age of 15 or 16, a very tolerable amount of reading of real Latin authors could

properly be expected. But as time went on the field of entry widened, and other Boards (the Northern Board in 1909, the London Senior Schools Examination Board in 1910) entered that field. The new secondary schools (as we called them then), when they did Latin at all, began it at the earliest at the age of eleven or twelve years. Girls, in particular, who had never had anything quite analogous to the boys' preparatory schools, seldom began much before thirteen. This later start, and the fact that other subjects competed for time and left only five — or even four — periods a week for Latin, should logically have caused a drastic change in methods of teaching and a corresponding modification in the nature and standard of examination. But in fact no such re-thinking ever took place. Proof of this is the continued use even to this day of course-books and composition manuals compiled in the eighteen-sixties or -seventies. Sixth-form standards, it was rightly felt, had to be maintained; those public schools which had really good classics could not contentedly see the level lowered; and so, instead of a complete review in the interests of the majority, or the adoption of two standards (as in Elementary Mathematics and Additional Mathematics), a gradual and haphazard process of reducing the demands and lowering the expectation all round has set in. This is where we find ourselves today.

If we were planning a Latin examination, *de novo*, for the Ordinary level, what would it be right to expect, and what kind of papers should we set? Ideally, most teachers would agree, this is the wrong stage for publicly examining Latin at all: it is too early to expect wide reading and to set genuine unprepared translation (which can only be done on the strength of such reading); and it is too late merely to examine routine accident and elementary syntax, which should be covered in two years, and not in four or five. But for some time (though not, we may hope, for ever), and for a proportion of our pupils, at any rate (though even now not necessarily for all), the Ordinary-level Latin is with us, and there is a demand for examination then, when the other subjects are examined; though it remains a

question whether those who are going to do Latin, or Greek, in sixth forms need enter for the Ordinary level in those subjects at all. Is it too revolutionary – or too reactionary – to suggest that the syllabus should go back to its original aim – that of testing what in fact is learnt – and that it should seek to avoid prescribing content and method of school work? And if it did allow teachers freedom to adopt their own lines, would they welcome that freedom? 'Satis prospectum servituti'. And how would they use it?

Let us assume, as the normal state, a course of four or five years before the Ordinary-level examination. What can we safely suppose that all pupils of 'grammar school' ability, with reasonably competent teaching, should know, and should be able to offer for examination, whatever the views held and methods adopted by those who have taught them? Some knowledge of vocabulary, of a general rather than a technical (military or legal) kind; some ability to understand, and therefore to translate, straightforward Latin; and, for this purpose, a sufficiently sure grasp of accident and syntax to make the orderly understanding of Latin possible; some knowledge of the place of Rome in world history, whether this can or should be examined or not. This may be regarded as a minimum requirement, common to those who will pursue the study of Latin further (whether in a classical course or as a support for history, law or modern languages) and to those who will give it up as a 'subject' but should bring from it some benefit to their general education.

Of what papers should the examination consist if it is to test this sort of knowledge? May we not at once dispose of the dismal and defeatist heresy that every bit of work must be examined, or that nothing will be taken seriously that is not likely to be the subject of a question on the paper? Teaching ability has not sunk as low as that. Presumably translation will play a principal part in the examination. Is there enough real Latin – of the Latin, that is, written by the ancients and preserved in our existing texts – to provide a sufficient variety of easy enough

passages for unprepared translation? Is there any reason why the later, or medieval, Latin should not be drawn upon? After all, we are considering an examination, a test of ability to read easy Latin with understanding, and we are not, by our examination syllabus, laying down exactly what every school must read. Besides, as many pupils will want Latin for reading historical or legal documents as for strictly classical use. And in any case, the accusative plural of *annus* is *annos*, and a verb agrees in number and person with its subject, as well in Bede and Einhard as in Caesar or Cicero; and if all our pupils got those facts right, they would be doing better than many of them do at present.

Granted that we set a paper on translation into English, are we going to examine on set books or simply by means of unprepared translation? Or is that antithesis a false one, and is there a third possibility, hitherto little explored – that of 'recommending reading in Latin'? At one time, set books had an evil reputation; the best pupils avoided them and, offering unscens, got lower marks than dullards who had learnt the crib by heart. Then, where Boards had dropped set books in favour of unscens, it was discovered that many schools read no connected Latin at all, but prepared for the examination by intensively working through collections of gobblets – or past examination papers, in which there is a brisk trade. The saddest part of it all was that, whatever policy a Board adopted – acting, without any doubt, with the best intentions and on the advice of those who took the trouble to offer advice – teachers came to regard the examination as prescribing their methods and even the content of their lessons. Over and over again, school Latin syllabuses enter against the fifth form 'as for G.C.E.' and nothing more. The examination tail has, in fact, come to wag the pedagogical dog.

Next, what of composition? Most experienced teachers will agree that, in one form or another, it is a very important help towards understanding a language; a good many will maintain, with much reason, that it is an essential means to that end;

though, rightly or wrongly, continental practice has always set much less store by it than English. But, to judge from many popular Latin course-books and from the practice of many teachers, both in maintained and in independent schools, one might almost imagine that the chief purpose of learning Latin was to master, in writing, the oddities of *quin* or *dum* and the more improbable kind of conditional clause. This is surely a little unreal. The time allowed for the earlier stages of Latin is not what it once was; the academic qualifications of very many teachers are very different from those of the teachers of the nineteen-twenties (even if the classes of their degrees were the same – and they are not – this would still be true); and the proportion – though not the absolute number – of all beginners who will go on to become classical scholars is far smaller than it was. The accumulated experience of centuries is not to be neglected or undervalued; but it needs to be enriched by the results of recent research into the method of language learning, so that the best use may be made of the time available. (Do teachers of Latin profit as much as they might from the experience of the more successful modern language teachers?) The proportion of marks given at the Ordinary level for juggling with concentrated syntactical puzzles has rightly been reduced by most Boards; but even now the papers set seem, in many cases, to represent the flavour of the old tradition (that of preparatory school, Common Entrance, public school scholarship, classical side), diluted indeed but still clearly recognizable. The problem of contriving a suitable examination in Latin is, even numerically considered, an important one. It is not a matter that concerns just a diminishing number of selected pupils. Even before the last war, the annual entry in Latin in the School Certificate had reached something over 28,000. Now there are close on 50,000 Ordinary-level candidates each year, a figure not far short of one-fifth of all entrants for the certificate, and there is no sign of diminution. At any given time, too, well over a quarter of a million pupils are learning Latin in England and Wales, and the work of most of them is influenced, directly

or indirectly, by the requirements of public examinations. The demands of faculties, and of colleges at the ancient universities, and the conviction of heads of schools that Latin has something of value to offer – all these combine to keep Latin statistically important. All these – and inertia? What is the relative importance of these contributory elements?

The whole situation is complicated by the fact that no one knows where, in these matters of public examinations, sovereignty really resides. In the individual Board? But no Board dare make basic modifications in its practice or its standard without regard to the other Boards. In the universities? But the examination, while it affords a criterion, amongst other things, for university entrance, is primarily a test of performance at school. In the schools, then? But what school can – or, at any rate, will – go its own way, however eminent its classical record or however high its present repute? In the Secondary School Examinations Council (*quod honoris causa nomino*)? But that august body, while it can exercise a valuable restraining or standardising influence on the examinations as a whole and can curb eccentricities planned in particular subjects, has by tradition or through abdication no power of initiating changes or guiding policy within a subject. In the Minister of Education? But he acts, in effect, through the S.S.F.C. and so has hitherto made himself subject to its limitations, even though there has lately been clear evidence of Curzon Street's increasing interest in the content of the curriculum.

It is for these reasons, and for others like them, that a body such as J.A.C.T. is needed, to bring together the experience, and to concentrate the will for improvement, of those who actually teach Latin. There will not necessarily be unanimity, even in quite major issues like that of the form of the first examination. But it is vital that there should exist a representative organisation to secure that the best Latin teaching can be suitably examined, and that teaching which is less inspired or less well-informed should be helped and guided by a suitable examination syllabus. The Boards always show themselves ready to

PAPER I

COMPOSITION AND UNPREPARED TRANSLATION

Thursday, 1 December 1960. 2 hours

adapt their schemes to meet substantial and justifiable demands. The problem is to organise the demands in such a way that we may have the best possible kind of examination; that is to say, an examination which, while it follows rather than dictates the activity of teachers who know their own minds, will yet be beneficial to the larger number, who will always rely to some extent on external guidance.

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- TRANSLATE INTO LATIN:
- A**
- 1 My friends will not be able to go to Rome this year.
 - 2 Nobody knows by what route Hannibal crossed the mountains.
 - 3 Orpheus used to sing so well that rocks and trees followed him.
 - 4 Although I advised you wisely, you were unwilling to obey me.
 - 5 Even if Pompeius had remained in Italy, he would not have defeated Caesar.
 - 6 I have often told you not to put your feet on the table.

TRANSLATE INTO ENGLISH:

B

Lucretius' attempt to smuggle food into a besieged town ends in disaster

Magna copia frumenti comparata considit Lucretius non longius ab oppido decem milibus, unde paulatim frumentum in oppidum supportaret. dispositis ibi praesidiis, hora noctis circiter decima silvestribus angustisque itineribus frumentum importare in oppidum coepit. quorum strepitum cum vigiles castrorum sensissent, exploratorumque missi quae gererentur renuntiassent, Caninius celeriter cum cohortibus armatis ex proximis castris in frumentarios sub ipsam lucem impetum fecit. hi repentino malo perterriti diffugiunt ad sua praesidia; quae cum nostri vidissent, acrius contra armatos incitati neminem ex eo numero vivum capi patiuntur.

HIRTTUS, adapted

praesidium, an outpost.

C

TRANSLATE INTO LATIN:

It is said that in those times the Muslemi always kept their word. Once a certain general whom they had captured and led to their king complained that he was thirsty. The king ordered a slave to bring water, and he was surprised because the general seemed to be unwilling to accept it. But the general said, 'I am afraid that I shall be killed as soon as I begin to drink.' The king promised that he would be safe until he had drunk the water. Hearing this, the general immediately threw the cup on to the ground. At first the king wanted to punish him with death, but he remembered the custom of his country, and allowed him to live.

to keep one's word, *fidem servare*,
surprised, *attonitus*,
to be thirsty, *sitire*,
cup, *bechlam*.

PAPER II

UNPREPARED TRANSLATION AND QUESTIONS

Wednesday, 14 December 1960. 2 hours

A

TRANSLATE:

Information given by a slave leads to the apprehension and punishment of fire-raisers at Rome
 Romae multiplex circa forum incendium ortum est. eodem tempore septem tabernae arserunt, postea privata quoque aedificia; aedes Vestae vix defensa est per tredecim servos: nocte ac die continuatum incendium fuit: nec ulli dubium fuit quin id humana fraude factum esset, quod pluribus simul locis ignes coorti essent. itaque consul ex auctoritate senatus edixit, si quis indicaret quorum opera id factum esset incendium, praemium fore libero pecuniam, servo libertatem. eo praemio inductus servus (Manus ei nomen erat) indicavit dominos suos et quinque praeterea nobiles Campanos, quorum parentes a consule *senari perclassi* erant, id incendium fecisse, passimque facturos esse alia nisi comprehendantur. comprehensi sunt ipsi familiaeque eorum. quaestio foro medio haberi coepit: confessi sunt omnes, atque in dominos servosque consens *animadversum* est: iudici libertas est data.

LIVY, adapted

securi percutere = to behead.
animadvertere in = to punish.

B

TRANSLATE:

To put out a fire, Metellus breaks the rule which allows only women to enter the sanctuary of Vesta

heu quantum timere patres, quo tempore Vesta
 arsit, et est tectis obruta paene suis!
 attonitae flebant demisso crine ministrac:
 abstulerat vires corporis ipse timor.
 provolat in medium, et magna 'succurrite!' voce
 'non est auxilium flere' Metellus ait.
 haurit aquas, tollensque manus 'ignoscite!', dixit;
 'sacra vir intrabo non adeunda viro.'

OVID

haurire = to draw.

C

Answer Questions 1 and 2 and two others

- 1 Give one English word derived from the root of each of the following Latin words taken from Section A: arserunt; aedificia; dubium; edixit; quaestio. (*You may add or change a prefix*).
- 2 Scan the last four lines of the verse passage (*provolat . . . viro*) marking the quantities of the syllables, the feet, and the main caesuras.
- 3 Describe in not more than fifteen lines a typical day in the life of a Roman senator.
- 4 Name three Roman roads (in Italy or the provinces), and give the Latin names of two towns on one of them.
- 5 State (in not more than one sentence each) the claim to fame of *five* of the

- following: L. Junius Brutus; Horatius Cocles; Pyrrhus; Regulus; Vercingetorix; Maecenas; the Emperor Titus; Pliny the Younger.
- 6 Describe (in not more than two lines on each) the activities of *five* of the following: The Muses; the Furies; the Parcae; the Harpies; the Sirens; the Argonauts; the Giants; the Centaurs.
 - 7 What were the powers of either the consuls, or the tribunes of the plebs?

LATIN SET BOOKS

Answer all the questions in both sections III (a) and III (b). Answers to each of the sections III (a) and III (b) must be written on separate sheets of paper, and the sections handed in separately.

PAPER III(a). CAESAR, *Bellum Gallicum* vii, 41-71, 77-89

1 TRANSLATE:

a haec habita contione et ad extremam orationem confirmatis militibus, ne ob hanc causam animo permoverentur neu quod iniquitas loci attulisset id virtuti hostium tribuerent, eadem de profectione cogitans quae ante senserat legiones ex castris eduxit aciemque idoneo loco constituit. cum Vercingetorix nihilominus in aequum locum descenderet, levi facto equestri proelio atque secundo in castra exercitum reduxit. cum hoc idem postero die fecisset, satis ad Gallicam ostentationem minuendam militumque animos confirmandos factum existimans in Aeduos movit castra. ne tum quidem insecutus hostibus, tertio die ad flumen Elaver pontes reficit eoque exercitum traducit.

b dum longius ab munitione aberant Galli, plus multitudine telorum proficiebant; postea quam propius successerunt, aut se stimulis inopiantes inducunt aut in scrobes delati transiiebantur aut ex vallo ac turribus traiecit pila muralibus interbant. multis undique vulneribus acceptis, nulla munitione perrupta, cum lux appeteret, veriti ne ab latere aperto ex superioribus castris eruptione circumvenirentur se ad suos receperunt. at interiores, dum ea quae a Vercingetorige ad eruptionem praeparata erant proferrunt, priores fossas explevit, diutius in his rebus administrandis morati prius suos discessisse cognoverunt quam munitionibus appropriquarent. ita re infecta in oppidum revertunt.

- 8 Give the perfect participle passive (nom. masc. sing.) of *attulisset* and *reficit* (from Question 1a), and the present infinitive passive of *transiiebantur* and *traiecit* (from Question 1b).
- 9 *Without translating*, answer the questions appended to the following passages:
 a consecutus id quod animo proposuerat Caesar receptui cani iussit legionique declinare . . . signa constituit.
 What was the object that Caesar had achieved?
 By what stratagem had he achieved it?
 What unfortunate consequence followed?
 b tum Labienus tanta rerum commutatione longe aliud sibi capiendum conallium atque antea senserat intellegebat.
 In what ways had the military situation changed?
 What had been Labienus' original plan?
 What had he to do now?
 c In cum ad munitiones Romanorum accessissent, flentes omnibus precibus orabant ut se in servitutem receptos cibo inarent.
 Who were these people, and why did they make this appeal?
 What was Caesar's response?

4 Answer the questions appended to the following passages, which need not be translated:

- a quae fuit causa quare toto *absent* bello.
Account for the mood of *absent*.
- b discedentibus mandat ut suam quisque eorum civitatem adeat omnesque qui per aetatem arma ferre *possint* ad bellum cogant.
Account for the mood of *possint*.
- c postremo ipse, cum vehementius pugnaretur, integros *subsidio* adducit.
Account for the case of *subsidio*.

PAPER IIIb. VIRGIL, *Aeneid* xii, 383-952

1 TRANSLATE:

- a nigra velut magnas domini cum divitis aedes
pervolat et pennis alta atria lustrat hirundo
pabula parva legens nidisque loquacibus escas,
et nunc porticibus vacuis, nunc umida circum
stagna sonat: similis medios Iuturna per hostes
fertur equis rapidoque volans obit omnia curru,
ianque hic germanum ianque hic orientat ovanthem
nec conferre manum patitur, volat avia longe.
haud minus Aeneas tortos legit obvius orbes,
vestigatque virum et disiecta per agmina magna
voce vocat.

- b 'quae iam finis erit, coniunx? quid denique restat?
indigetem Aenean scis ipsa et scire fatentis
deberi caelo fatisque ad sidera tolli.
quid struis? aut qua spe gelidis in nubibus haeres?
mortalin decuit violari vulnere divum?
aut ensem (quid enim sine te Iuturna valeret?)
creptum reddi Turno et vim crescere victis?
desine iam tandem prechibusque inflectere nostris,
ne te tantus edit tactam dolor et mihi curae
saepe tuo dulci tristes ex ore recursent.
ventum ad supremum est, terris agitare vel undis
Troianos potuisti, infandum accendere bellum,
deformare domum et luctu miscere hymenaeos.'

2 Scan the following lines, marking the quantities, feet and main caesuras:
tum vero adsurgunt irae, insidisque subactus,
diversos ubi sensit equos currumque referri,
multa Iovem et laesi testatus foederis aras.

3 Without translating, answer the questions appended to the following passages:

- a urbem hodie, causam belli, regna ipsa Latini,
ni frenum accipere et vici parere fatentur,
erum et aequa solo fumantia culmina ponam.
i Who is speaking?
ii What is the name of the city?
iii Why is it called 'causa belli'?

- b idque diu, dum terga dabant palantia Teucris,
suffecit: postquam arma dei ad Volcania ventum est,
mortalis mucro glacies ceu futilis icu
dissluit.

- i Explain *mortalis mucro* and *arma dei Volcania*.
- ii To whom did they respectively belong?
- c hanc versa in faciem Turni se pestis ob ora
fertque referatque sonans clippeumque everberat alis.
illi membra novus solvit formidine torpor.
i What does 'pestis' refer to?
ii What is meant by 'hanc faciem'?
- iii What was the object of the action here described?

4 Answer the questions appended to the following passages, which need not be translated:

- a hoc Venus obscuro *faciem* circumdata nimbo
detulit.
Account for the case of *faciem*.
- b mussat rex ipse Latinus
quos generos *vocat*.
Account for the mood of *vocat*.
- c as *illi* solvuntur frigore membra
vltaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.
Account for the case of *illi*.

First Review

Roughly, there are two theories about O-level Latin which are *prima facie* tenable. There is a progressive theory that it can be taught as a living language, or at least as a language used in a cultural *milieu* which can be made real to us: and there is a conservative theory that it can be taught purely as a mental or linguistic discipline. A third theory, that the O-level examination is just a way of testing fledgling classicists, never gets off the ground, since only a small proportion of the candidates will ever become classicists. In any case, these papers cater no better for the third theory than for the other two.

In general the paper is based on the conservative theory. It can be passed by anyone who has parrot-learned the necessary stuff. You are given 'Muslimi' and 'Pompeius': it would be unfair to ask you to translate 'Muslims' and 'Pompey'. The sentences restrict themselves to the usual list of indirect question and command, consecutive, concessive, and so on: no imagination is required even in the prose. As long as you put down things like 'corn-supplying' and 'tenth hour' in the unseen you are all right: no-one will ask you how the Romans supplied corn or when the tenth hour actually was. One candidate's translation of the Ovid makes the point: 'Alas, how much they feared, the fathers at what time Vesta burnt and was nearly overwhelmed in their own house! The astonished ministers wept with let-down hair: fear itself had taken away the strength of the body. He flies into

the middle and "Help!" with a great voice, "to weep is not help", says Metellus. He draws the waters and raising hands says "Pardon! A man I will enter sacred things not to be gone to by a man".

If the paper is supposed to test grammar, syntax, vocabulary and the ability to piece words together, this translation ought to score about 90%: even though the candidate could not in fact give a correct answer to a single question about the general sense of any part of it (I asked him). On the conservative theory we say that this does not matter: it's not an I.Q. test. But then what is Section C doing, asking us for derivations and a typical day in the life of a Roman senator? (A rather dangerous question, I'd have thought: there were senators *and* senators.) Or why make them translate Ovid at all? We don't *have* to make it look grotesque. And above all, what do we expect them to do about question 4 of IIIb? Are we satisfied if they have been inadequately drilled to write down 'accusative of respect', 'indirect rhetorical question' and 'dative of indirect object' (even assuming that these phrases mean anything), or are they required to show some intelligence and grammatical sensitivity? The first seems silly and the second impossible.

On the progressive theory the paper is, for converse reasons, a failure: there is no need to repeat the illustrations. But even Section C, which looks suspiciously like a mere sop to the progressive theory, can be answered by rote. Scansion can be reduced to elementary arithmetic, and anyone can learn a sentence on the Emperor Titus or 'not more than two lines' on the Giants. If we intend to be properly progressive, we should be teaching Latin as it was spoken - Plautus would be the best bet. In fact we teach a language which was artificial even to the Romans, in a far stronger sense than English literature is artificial to us. Imagine the teaching of English being dictated solely by the works of Milton, Spenser and Alexander Pope. Of course this is a perfectly proper subject for study - for pupils who are going to get far enough to derive some value from it. But it is a highly sophisticated and specialised study, and there

is no use our pretending otherwise by asking questions about Roman roads and Horatius Cocles. The paper does not fit the third theory either.

If Latin is supposed to 'teach you to think', then we ought to decide what kind of thinking we are testing. Rule-learning and memorising are not thinking: or if they are, then we are testing the competence of the teacher's drill rather than the abilities of the pupil. A vague cultural and imaginative grasp of Roman life and letters is not thinking either: or if it is, we are not testing the results of a strict mental discipline. We could and should, in my view, test the pupil's grasp of *meaning*. There are hints in this paper: in sentence 2 the candidate who has learnt 'via' as 'way' has to see that it will do for 'route' as well, or else know that he can use 'iter', and in the penultimate line of the prose he has to decide whether to use 'rus', 'terra' or 'patria' for 'country'. We can imagine other simple tests: how many candidates would realise that 'although' is equivalent to 'notwithstanding' the fact that, or be able to distinguish between 'whether . . . or' as an indirect question and as a double conditional? This kind of thinking is a mental discipline that could be useful and significant for all pupils. But the papers would have to be radically altered. Questions about the unscens, for instance, would have to be set, designed to elicit whether the candidate had got the sense or not: in this instance we could take a lead given by the A-level General Studies papers of the Northern Board. We would have, especially, to get away from the one-one correspondence of words, not least when the text-books get it wrong or make it senseless (sterno - strew). Between the conservative and the progressive theories there is a way (or route): but we have to make it ourselves. It is easy, and may even seem cheap, to criticise O-level papers for failing to take this way: but they merely reflect the totally uncritical state of mind, which we all share, towards the teaching of Latin in general.

We have heard that a French professor is busy with a new discipline: *dokimasiologie*, or the science of examining. Pending the establishment of a chair in this country we have, for the purposes of this review, ventured to propound four axioms of our own.

Axiom 1 It is the duty of examiners to recognize that candidates and their teachers, speaking generally, approach an examination according to the letter and not the spirit in which it was set.

If there is a short cut to success on the right side of actually cheating, it will be taken. This has always been so, but the present competitive frenzy puts the teacher under particularly cruel pressure from pupils, parents and headmasters (or headmistresses) to make sure of O-level passes – as many and as cheaply as possible.

Axiom 2 It is strictly the business of examinations to test whether the skills or knowledge under examination have been acquired; not how they have been acquired.

O-level examiners, for example, may think that skill in reading and writing Latin cannot be effectively taught without drill in accidence or syntax, or cannot be interestingly taught without reference to English derivatives; but if skill in reading and writing Latin is the subject of the examination then accidence and syntax *per se*, and English derivatives, are not the examiner's business.

This is a hard saying, because often examiners have enlightened ideas on how a subject should be taught; but examiners are never in a position to check the results of their good intentions, and the most laudable ideas put forward in the examiners' meeting may result in the most deplorable activities in the classroom.

Axiom 3 is the logical consequence of Axioms 1 and 2.

Axiom 3 To deserve a place in a system of education an examination must test skills or knowledge which cannot be counterfeited and which are an educationally worthwhile acquisition.

Axiom 4 It is the business of an examination entitled Latin to examine knowledge of Latin; not e.g. of comparative grammar, the origins of English vocabulary or the ability to think clearly.

This is perhaps the hardest saying of all. Many of us feel that O-level Latin should include a study of Roman history, social customs and mythology¹, others of us that it should be related to the study of English, others, in defiance of the psychologists, that its purpose is mental training; and still others that it should be a study of language in the abstract. No doubt a good case can be made for all these conceptions: unfortunately they conflict in their implications for what should be taught in periods allocated to Latin (and what therefore should be examined): there is no one to arbitrate between us: so the only legitimate course for examiners is to interpret the title of the examination with strictness and confine themselves to examining a knowledge of Latin. Knowledge of a language (as distinct from knowledge about a language) has been defined as the possession of four skills: to speak it, to understand it when spoken, to write it and to read it with understanding. The first pair of skills have, for the last hundred years at least, been, rightly or wrongly, considered as dispensable in the case of a classical language. The present reviewers hope that to write Latin will shortly be con-

¹ In fact some test of acquaintance with these would be demanded by a rigorous application of this axiom. A test of the ability to read Latin is not satisfactory when it accepts consul as a translation of *consul*, *Vesta* of *Vesta* and forum of *forum*, without ascertaining whether the candidate knows what the forum was, and what *Vesta* and the consuls did.

sidered a dispensable skill (at O-level) but until this has been authoritatively, or collectively decided, it must be considered as the job of the examination to test skill in writing and in reading Latin.

Surveyed in the light of these axioms the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board papers under review score slightly fewer black marks than would those of some examining boards. There are, at least, no questions demanding to know the genitive singular of x or the imperfect subjunctive passive of y. Nevertheless Paper I begins badly with six nine-to-twelve-word sentences. An ability to write Latin roughly comparable to the ability to read Hirtius (adapted) is not going to be tested by these sentences. An isolated sentence is an unnatural piece of language in any circumstances and particularly so when the language is as highly articulated as Latin. It would be possible to gain high marks on this question without being able to construct the simplest piece of continuous prose. In fact the sentences, one may guess, are put there to test, not the ability to write Latin, but the knowledge of certain constructions.

We fault this question under axiom 1 (it would accept counterfeit knowledge gained as the result of repetitious drill in a few constructions known to be examinable), and under axiom 2 (it is an attempt to dictate how skill in Latin composition shall be taught).

Paper I Question C (Translation into Latin). If there is any value in expecting pupils of sixteen to write Latin we could well expect them to be able to work with a piece of English less painfully devised to lead them to the use of certain Latin idioms, phrases and constructions (cf. axiom 3).

Paper I Question B and *Paper II Questions A and B* (Unscens) offend against axiom 1 in accepting translation alone as a test of comprehension. How are the examiners going to discriminate against the kind of counterfeit knowledge displayed by the version of Ovid which Mr. Wilson quotes?

Paper II Question C 1 (English derivatives) scores a black mark under axiom 4 (it is irrelevant); similarly *Questions C 4, 5 and 6*

(Ancient history and mythology). *Question C 2* is damned if we accept the remarks of Professor Brink (in his article in this issue) about scansion as practised on paper — this applies also to *Paper III Question B 2*.

Paper III. Set books introduce an element (the ability to memorize the plot of a piece of narrative) not strictly relevant to skill in reading Latin. Furthermore to continue to examine the comprehension of the Latin of a set book by asking merely for a translation is to condone a public scandal, since it is notorious that many pupils are made to learn a translation by heart. We would, however, like to compliment the examiners on the superiority of their context questions (*IIIa 3* and *IIIb 3*) to the much less subtle and searching formula adopted by some boards ('give the context of:').

All in all we come to roughly the same conclusion as Mr. Wilson, that this paper is a monument to the present confusion of thought on what O-level Latin is supposed to do for those who study it: but for this the examiners are no more to blame than are all of us who teach Latin.

What then should be done? We suggest that a decision be made that elementary Latin (as a self-contained course) is taught to put our pupils in contact through the Latin language with Roman civilization and Latin literature; that the examination known as O-level Latin should be abolished and its place taken by a paper entitled Latin Literature and Roman Civilization; that this should prescribe two prose authors and two verse authors (or verse anthologies) to be selected from a wide range (which would include medieval Latin); that these should be examined by comprehension questions, by the demand for translation (of short pieces) for which marks would be allotted for English style, by context questions of the type used in the Paper under review, and by questions exacting intelligent knowledge of the social and historical background to the texts, and a modicum of literary appreciation; that there should be an *optional* oral examination to test ability to read aloud Latin Verse and Prose, and (dare we add?) answer simple questions

in Latin on the texts read; and that no attempt should be made at O-level to examine the skills required for an advanced study of Latin: this should wait until A-level.

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Reply

As a member of the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examinations Board, and as one of the Revisers who superintend the setting of its O-level Latin Papers, I am always on the look-out for ways of improving the examination, and disappointed that so few constructive suggestions come from the schools, although the Board invites criticisms of each summer's papers and arranges a meeting to discuss them. So I hoped to find in the foregoing criticisms much that would help us who are responsible for the setting of papers to do our job better. But once again I am disappointed.

A large part of what these critics have written amounts to no more than baying at the moon. Mr. Wilson, indeed, seems to think it a pity that Latin is taught in schools, since the Romans have so thoughtlessly bequeathed to us Cicero, Virgil, and Horace, when what we really wanted was *Room on the Palatine* or *I Was Nero's Butler*. Given the literature we possess, he sees Latin as 'a highly sophisticated and specialised study', and therefore presumably one which ought not to be taught and examined at O-level at all. I agree with him to the extent of believing that at present A-level candidates in Latin are too few, and O-level candidates too numerous; many, if not most, of the latter should (to the advantage of the former) have been weeded out after a two-year course – enough to confer on them some of the benefits claimed for Latin, such as the discipline of an in-

flected language and some acquaintance with the roots from which vocabulary has developed in English and the Romance languages. Time is on Mr. Wilson's side, now that the growing proportion of science specialists no longer needs Latin for university entrance. But for the present we are concerned with a situation in which thousands of candidates are being entered every year for an external examination in Latin at O-level, and the question we are supposed to be discussing is whether they are being examined in the right way.

Much of Mr. Wilson's criticism is directed not at the way Latin is examined but at the way it is taught in schools, his own included. He leads with his chin when he quotes an excruciating version of a passage of Ovid, ascribing it to a candidate whom he was in a position to cross-examine, and seems to think that by doing so he is criticising the practice of setting Ovid for translation. Does he expect us to believe that the candidate who made nonsense in English of a passage whose vocabulary and construction were within his grasp was doing so for the first time, and that this was somehow the fault of the examination? Long before he reached O-level this boy should have been taught what translation means by having this sort of work returned to him to be put into decent English.

Mr. Wilson also deplores the use of grammatical labels (the examples he gives, incidentally, would score precisely half marks), and anything learnt 'by rote'. Here he is in conflict with his fellow-critics' thoroughly sound Axiom 2. If a candidate knows something about the Emperor Titus I am glad of it, and it is no concern of mine how he came by the knowledge. Anyway, what is so wicked about memorising facts? At my first school I learnt the dates of the Kings and Queens of England by rote (how else?); I still know them, and find it very useful knowledge. As for grammatical labels, examiners neither invite nor welcome them. If we ask 'Why is this verb in the subjunctive?' we may *hope* for the answer 'Because it is part of a statement for which the speaker disclaims responsibility'; but since the best we ever get is 'Because it is in a subordinate clause in

oratio obliqua' we know that this is what the candidates have been taught and accordingly give credit for it.

The criticisms from London University open with an impressive list of axioms, with which I had no quarrel until I came to the fourth one and was told that it is not the business of an examination entitled Latin to test the ability to think clearly — as if any examination in any subject could, or should, avoid testing this ability. As I read on I realised that this axiom was a trap, being intended merely as a *reductio ad absurdum*. These critics do not really want us to examine in Latin as a language *in vacuo*. On the contrary, they want us to lay *less* emphasis on language and *more* on background, and therefore to stop calling the subject Latin. This we would have to do if we abandoned composition, as they would wish, since every examining board lies under the heavy hand of the Secondary Schools Examinations Council, which has ruled that no subject may bear the name of a language, dead or alive, unless it includes composition in that language. I have myself appeared before this formidable body to plead that composition should not be required of A-level candidates who were not classical specialists. The arguments I used were an expansion of Axiom 2; but I was made to feel that I had been a very naughty boy, and we were obliged to give our prose-free option the cumbersome title Latin Translation and Roman History. With the present educational structure it would take many years to secure agreement on such sweeping changes as the critics desire; and I think it is perverse of them to argue that in the meantime we should run counter to their long-term aims by narrowing down the range of the examination just because the subject is entitled Latin, and Latin is a language.

Searching for something immediately constructive in these two sets of criticisms, all I can find is that translation is an imperfect means of testing comprehension, and that the type of question which the critics approve in our set book papers might with advantage be extended to the other papers. I find this idea at-

tractive, and would welcome suggestions as to how it could best be put into practice.

I do not think it profitable to comment in detail on other less constructive criticisms, but there are a few points with which I would like to conclude. It is the business of examiners dealing with a large number of schools to steer a middle course which will be generally acceptable despite the fact that different schoolmasters have different teaching methods and different ideas concerning the scope of the subject. Infrequency of criticism suggests that approximately the right balance, from the schools' points of view, is at present being struck. The last major change made at the prompting of the schools was the incorporation of Section C in Paper II; this was disliked by the examiners, especially when it induced an outcrop of cram books, but has survived mainly because it bolsters up the percentage of passes. Recent changes in the examining of set books (still further modified this year in order to reduce the value of memorised translation) have been made on the initiative of the examiners. If they have been conservative in retaining the form of the other papers, it is because the sort of changes they would like to make might operate to the disadvantage of borderline candidates. It is no use talking to O-level examiners about the imaginative candidate who is quite capable of turning a normal piece of English into Latin. Such a candidate has no business with O-level, since the G.C.E. was so devised as to enable him to bypass it; if he does take it, he passes with ease and can go on to exercise his imagination at S-level and beyond. The candidate by whom we set our sights is one who has with difficulty mastered the vocabulary and grammar necessary for comprehension of the easier Latin authors, and we aim at testing him in what we know or believe he has been taught. If we continue to compose silly sentences inviting the use of the commoner syntactical constructions it is because candidates are less easily confused by these than by continuous prose, even when the latter is so framed as to steer them clear of difficulties beyond their present range. Faced as we are with a steady decline in the

standard of Latin as taught and learnt in schools, we are exposed to the temptation of setting more elementary papers year by year; if we do so, we risk encouraging still further slackness in the teaching and learning of the subject — see Axiom 1 and the remarks which follow it.

At the end of all this I am haunted by the fear of being told by Mr. Wilson that his specimen candidate did in fact obtain an O-level pass. If this is true, all I can say by way of excuse is that if the examiners failed as many candidates as they thought proper they would promptly be accused of sabotaging their own subject.

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