



**HARVARD**  
Department of the Classics

**THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY:  
THE CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE 2014  
LATIN PROSE COMPOSITION**

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Persephone: The Harvard Undergraduate Classics Journal  
Vol. 1, No. 2, Spring 2016 p. 1

<http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/persephone/idea-university>

## THE CHANCELLOR'S LATIN PRIZE 2014: PROSE

*audacibus annue coeptis*

Immo longe, si quis nescio quo pacto se ipsum erudiat, ea demum eruditio vestro gymnasio quod, cum tanta polliceatur, verum hominum mentibus parum prodest anteponenda est. Excluditote igitur ab omni doctrina eum quem veram sapientiam consecratur, remittitote studiosum ut suapte mente nitatur et indaget: multum proficiat si a vestro sermone praeceptisque disiectis prohibeatur. Omnino quidem pauci sunt qui magistro, qui studiis adsit et eos ad industriam stimulet, facile careant et, si soli sint, modo extremum, ut dicitur, digitum proferant; etiam pauciores (quamquam et talia ingenia inveniuntur) qui non indagando Marte suo sibi nimis confidere et laudem adrogare incipiant - sciunt isti, Brute, quid se deceat, de studio veritatis cogitant? -; sed qui, cum philosophiam rude perceptam, studiis perfusam sed non imbutam se habere seseque in tantis angustiis esse vel potius omnino deesse sentiant, cum se suis sententiis ac moribus ab communibus abhorrere videant, mentis egestatis numquam meminerint, longe paucissimi, immo fortasse est nemo. Quis est enim qui illas res quotquot tamquam subtilissimus pulvis in mentibus consederint et considant, quas facillime norunt promptissimasque habent omnes, diutius ignoret? Licet colloqui non possit, perverse praviterque disserere atque in eo gloriari soleat aut aliquid ineptum quod, quia inter se repugnet παράδοξον nominare audeat, aut rusticissimum quoddam, quia sententiosum et argutum existimet, se dixisse, licet cogitando pertinax, obstinatus disputando, ad alios persuadendos sit lentus et tardus. Concessis his rebus et aliis, amice, tamen maiore ingenio et consilio, sapientia clariore, liberaliore cultu, humanitate denique erit germaniore quam ii simplices quibus mentes variis ac multis materiis ideo solum, ut eas magistri formaliter periclitentur et experiantur, confertae sint, qui caecis studiis magis occupati sint quam ut se liberae cogitandi vel indagandi delectioni dedere possint, qui consequentia et prima promiscue devorent, qui philosophias ipsas fide, non intelligentia, adsequi posse putent, qui argumenta ediscant quin fundamenta percipiant, quique perinde ac putaris studiis modo perfectis omnia diligenter conferta et devorata statim evomant et, quamvis se exercuerint, nihil consecuti sint nisi forte quandam consuetudinem studendi.

Nay, self-education in any shape, in the most restricted sense, is preferable to a system of teaching which, professing so much, really does so little for the mind. Shut your College gates against the votary of knowledge, throw him back upon the searchings and the efforts of his own mind; he will gain by being spared an entrance into your Babel. Few indeed there are who can dispense with the stimulus and support of instructors, or will do anything at all, if left to themselves. And fewer still (though such great minds are to be found), who will not, from such unassisted attempts, contract a self-reliance and a self-esteem, which are not only moral evils, but serious hindrances to the attainment of truth. And next to none, perhaps, or none, who will not be reminded from time to time of the disadvantage under which they lie, by their imperfect grounding, by the breaks, deficiencies, and irregularities of their knowledge, by the eccentricity of opinion and the confusion of principle which they exhibit. They will be too often ignorant of what everyone knows and takes for granted, of that multitude of small truths which fall upon the mind like dust, impalpable and ever accumulating; they may be unable to converse, they may argue perversely, they may pride themselves on their worst paradoxes or their grossest truisms, they may be full of their own mode of viewing things, unwilling to be put out of their way, slow to enter into the minds of others; — but, with these and whatever other liabilities upon their heads, they are likely to have more thought, more mind, more philosophy, more true enlargement, than those earnest but ill-used persons, who are forced to load their minds with a score of subjects against an examination, who have too much on their hands to indulge themselves in thinking or investigation, who devour premiss and conclusion together with indiscriminate greediness, who hold whole sciences on faith, and commit demonstrations to memory, and who too often, as might be expected, when their period of education is passed, throw up all they have learned in disgust, having gained nothing really by their anxious labours, except perhaps the habit of application.

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