

Editorial Introduction

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In a time of discord, harmony is more important than ever. That is an aim of *Veritas Review*, an attempt, through visual and verbal art, of analysis and interpretation. We look back to look ahead in the present moment. I read to learn from the past, to draw on it to understand the now and the to be. For instance, I am reading an article on Greek ideas of harmony in music, written in 1963, the year John Kennedy was assassinated.¹ Etymology shows that harmony has an ancient root. As Edward A. Lipmann notes, *ar* or *har* are verbs in the Indo-European languages, meaning *unifying and ordering diverse or conflicting aspects into a whole*, and he observes: “Homer uses *ararisko* ‘connect,’ *aresko* ‘adapt, reconcile, satisfy,’ *arasso* ‘slam together, strike, play the lyre,’ and *harmozo* ‘fit together.’”² Homer and Plato make an appearance in this issue of *Veritas Review*, and Lipmann also reminds us about Plato and harmony: “Plato’s interest in the discipline of harmonics is grounded his conviction that harmony and music have a close relation to One of the ironic etymologies of the Cratylus specifically couples music with the harmony of nature.”³

Other ancient concerns are dignity and human rights. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, dignity can be found in *imago Dei*, the notion that humans are made in the image of God, and something also expressed in Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486).⁴ What if we had and will recognize human dignity rather than embracing violence, sin, and death in the world, wandering with Cain, or whatever secular equivalents of alienation or estrangement, pain and conflict? If we seek harmony and prosperity and scientific and other advancement, how can we allow for such a gap between self and others—something I explored in my book *The Poetics of Otherness* (2015)⁵—between harmony and discord? Do not most humans want to live in peace as individuals, with their families, in their communities? Stoicism considered natural law a way forward for human rights, although this point has been much debated.⁶ Another figure who was important for natural law and human rights was Hugo Grotius, who builds on others such as Thomas Aquinas and who sees right action as being based on the rational and the social.⁷ The main thing is the dignity and freedom of the human. I maintain that culture, art, and creation are distinctive aspects of what makes us human. Artificial intelligence has come to challenge what makes us human and what is human creativity, and even pioneers such as Geoffrey Hinton have had qualms about it, as an article in *The New York Times* outlined.⁸ We create in a changing, strange, and volatile environment that may be increasingly fascinating but dangerous. In its own way, *Veritas Review* seeks to celebrate human creativity and harmony, expressing and exploring human dignity, freedom, rights.

Like the Abigail Adams Institute (AAI), *Veritas Review* encourages students and creates a framework for the exploration of creativity, arts, humanities, social sciences, and science. This issue begins and ends with two Harvard students. Darshan Kalola tells about his experience of how Jacinta Hogan moderated, at AAI, a conversation on Solzhenitsyn’s Harvard Commencement Address in 1978. Among other things, Kalola sees Solzhenitsyn’s contribution is to demonstrate moral weakness will lead to “atrocities, suffering, and evil.” Hogan, who sees the Russian as a hopeful artist, explains that she led a discussion group on Solzhenitsyn’s speeches. She explains that he sees the role of the artist “to sense more keenly than others the harmony of the world, the beauty and ugliness of man’s role in it—and to vividly communicate this to mankind.” This brings us back to harmony, which, from the start, is the key word for *Veritas Review*. Mohammed Said Alhalimi maintains that Solzhenitsyn is an artist using narrative to humanize history and one who stresses moral choice. Alhalimi sees Solzhenitsyn an example, someone suffering for belief in righteous ideas.

The next contribution is a selection of two poems from the manuscript of my poetry collection, *Les poèmes de Paris*, and my two translations of them into English. I grew up with both languages in the community and

so, in keeping with the interest in translation and poetry in *Veritas Review* from the first issue, I discussed this contribution with my fellow editors.

Film reviews follow, providing a typology of then and now. Movies are an art form that speaks to people across the spectrum and have also been a focus of our previous issues. Providing analysis and illuminating context, Manuel Lopez goes to the heart of *His Girl Friday* (1939), asks some perceptive questions about this political and romantic comedy and prompts us to go back and watch the film. Xavier Symonds revisits *Galipoli* (1981), its importance for Australia, what makes it such a pivotal film, in representing a defining event for that nation and for New Zealand, letting us know why without giving too much away for those who have not seen the movie. In interpreting *Ma Nuit chez Maud/My Night at Maud's* (1969), Jeronimo Ayesta considers doing philosophy through film; he likes textual analysis as a method of interpreting image in film and is interested in narrative and interpretation, inner and outer horizons, and the choices that are made.

Fiction and the interpretation of fiction have also been part of what we have been doing at *Veritas Review*. In his article on Cormac McCarthy, Constantin Waldschmidt explores, his comments on the novels suggesting how to read this author, text, and context. Waldschmidt sheds light on opaque passages in *No Country for Old Men* and discusses McCarthy in terms of the canon. Emil Pitkin's "Capital Impressions" furthers that exploration and focuses on Washington, DC, and the reader may ask if this is autobiographical fiction or fictional autobiography, or something else. Whatever the genre, the work is distinctive.

One of the distinctions of *Veritas Review* is the art of Catherine Ezell. She has a number of striking portraits in this issue, including a drawing of three Southern writers. Ezell says that she combines her love of literature and her need to draw and paint, as she is challenged to represent the characters of authors from her reading of their works.

In discussing the women in Homer, Eirene Allen examines the word *andra* (ἄνδρα) in the *Odyssey*. Her analysis of Greek opens up networks of meaning that cast light on Homer's work. Allen observes the relation between interpreting and translating Homer and how the women have been lost. Lauren Heilman examines the example of Aelia Eudocia Augusta, née Athenais, who travelled from Athens to Constantinople to Jerusalem, and Heilman maintains that the religious, literary, and philosophical ideas of Eudocia helped to bring Athens and Jerusalem into close conversation.

Danilo Petranovich introduces the last part of the issue under the rubric of "The Problem of Justice in Homer and Plato," which grew out of a series at AAI this fall. Beginning with Thucydides, the series then moved to the Homeric epics and to Plato's *Republic*. Petranovich gives a detailed idea of this significant series and some highlights. Manuel Lopez, who led the seminar, speaks about a psychological analysis of an attachment to justice that is present in the Melian dialogue and occurs throughout Homer and Plato. Maura Cahill calls attention to the Socratic method and the allegory of the cave, of seeking truth and reality beyond the shadows. In discussing Homer, Mathieu Ronayne asks questions about the relations among justice, persuasion, speech, and action. For Gabriel Margolies, the Melian Dialogue from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* is suggestive and tells us something about justice for the Athenians, which has implications for today, as regards ethical and political philosophy. Dr. Iryna Mykhailova talks of the community of AAI where the young can come to read and discuss philosophy to learn. Mathis Bitton talks about the importance of natural justice for the seminar and about asking about wrestling with the neglected questions of philosophy.

Rather than say too much about this section of the issue and the contributions to the whole issue, I shall refer the reader to the actual words and images of these accomplished contributors. In search of justice, beauty, truth, dignity, and rights, people may disagree, but to create and consider verbal and visual works, we all move forward even as we look back. Perhaps we glimpse beyond the shadows and hear the music of the spheres.

Notes

1. Edward A. Lipmann, “Hellenic Conceptions of Harmony,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 16, no. 1 (1963): 3–35.
2. *Ibid.*, 5.
3. *Ibid.*, 15.
4. See Remy Debes, *Dignity: A History*, Oxford Philosophical Concepts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
5. Jonathan Locke Hart, *The Poetics of Otherness: War, Trauma, and Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
6. See Michael J. Meyer, “Stoics, Rights, and Autonomy,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (1987): 267–71; Richard Bett, “Did the Stoics Invent Human Rights?”, in Rachana Kamtekar (ed.), *Virtue and Happiness: Essays in Honour of Julia Annas*, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
7. See C.B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); Jon Miller, “Stoics, Grotius and Spinoza on Moral Deliberation”, in Jon Miller and Brad Inwood (eds.), *Hellenistic and Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 116–140; Jon Miller, “Hugo Grotius and the Makings of Modern Natural Law”, in Rafael Domingo and John Witte Jr. (eds.), *Christianity and Global Law* (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 127–142.
8. See Cade Metz, “‘The Godfather of AI’ Leaves Google and Warns of Danger Ahead,” *The New York Times*, May 3, 2023.