

Letter from the Editor

Words and images are expressions of thought and feeling but are more than representations of contemplation and emotion: they are forms of action. *Veritas Review* (VR) is an act, something the Abigail Adams Institute (AAI) decided to do. Apathy leaves a vacuum. AAI encourages the whole human being as an individual and as a member of a community and one of the ways it does so is through VR. The goal of VR has been and is to foster harmony, to find a still moment in a world sometimes so disharmonious. The readers, alumni, contributors, editors, staff and students past and present have helped to make this happen through the action of making and sustaining VR and making this part of the effort of AAI to reach out to our growing community at Harvard and Cambridge, Boston and Massachusetts, in the United States and beyond. It takes will and work to keep an institute and journal going. I have the greatest admiration for AAI, its director and staff and all who participate in it and for their support of, and belief in, VR. The director and managing editor are key to so much and help to make VR happen. They do good in search of the good. The new look for VR is looking better all the time. VR is distinctive and individual in each issue but takes work and thought and expresses a community of contributors.

Continuity and change work together in the making of each issue of VR. This issue begins with a section: "Thoughts on Education." Danilo Petranovich speaks of the importance of the education of the human person and of an awareness of intellectual inheritance while exploring a crucial question, that is how to revitalize the university in what he calls an age of decline. Within society and the university, questions arise over individual thought, intellectual property, originality, teaching and learning, and the relation between machine and human, software and thinking, the benefits of intelligence and artificial intelligence, something Alan Turing began to think about in the 1930s. Dallas Terry's exploration of ChatGPT as friend or foe prompts us to consider these questions, some of which are ethical questions, such as what is the good or what is good for us? Maura Ronayne discusses something significant to Western culture since Plato and Aristotle, that is philosophy of education, the ideals and theories in relation to the practice of how we learn and teach, and she does so in connection with two figures, who stress private and public virtue in education, and are connected to the goals of AAI, Harvard, the United States and beyond: John and Abigail Adams.

The next section of the issue of VR is "Reflections on AAI Programming." Alexander Hughes muses on cemeteries and permanence and does so by considering Mount Auburn Cemetery, where he led a tour of fellow AAI students, as a burial ground, garden and memorial, a place that might affect or even instruct the feelings of the living. Manuel Lopez analyzes Tacitus, the great historian of the Roman empire, as an author much studied by Montesquieu and the founders of the American republic, how this Roman exposed and explored despots but also furnished those who apologized for absolute monarchy with the way realpolitik worked. Lopez also notes how Tacitus can teach with clarity what is at stake in the defense of liberty and justice – successful or not – that is ongoing. Michael Makej examines the six-week seminar on the revolutionary writings of John Adams that Danilo Petranovich organized at AAI. According to Makej, the seminar had sessions that covered political theory, the British-American constitutional crisis, John Adams' republican turn, his proposals for government, and the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, the last of which Makej led. Makej mentions that the seminar discussed, among other things, the common good and the relation between worship and virtue.

"Creative Writing and Essays" is the third section of the issue. Hannah Duane's "A Day Like Purim" is a delicate and thoughtful mediation on human and God, faith and doubt, seriousness and absurdity, prayer and the absence of prayer. In "Over the Abyss," a fiction, Michael Ochoa explores various perspectives on time and space, here and there, this side and that side: the abyss and beyond. Duane and Ochoa use different forms to represent dilemmas, what it is to be human.

The fourth part of the issue is “Movie Reviews.” Films are an important medium and, through their mix of image, word and music, reach the audience in ways distinct from other arts. Elliott R. Jones reviews Terrence Malick’s *The Tree of Life* as a meditation on evil and on sacrifice and gifts amidst suffering. Suan Sonna writes a review of *Snowpiercer* and focuses on its inequality and violence and whether it reflects society and gets viewers to engage with the world. Part of the strength of this section is the variety in the films under review, films that meant and mean a great deal to the reviewers.

This issue of VR brings together remarkable images and words and has a wide range in its appeal. I hope the readers of this issue will enjoy it as much as I did.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Hart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Jonathan" on the first line and "Hart" on the second line.

Jonathan Hart