

Vita Nuova

Ante Wessels

to fleur

thank you, all of you!

“The sense of the great instruction is: to clarify the vivid shine of Virtue, to love man, and to only find rest in the absolute good.”

Confucius

“If, when I point out one corner of the subject, the student cannot work out the other three for himself, I do not go on.”

Confucius

Cage

“The image I see is a sort of Roman life. A man with a beautiful, trained body, really very beautiful, beautiful muscles and beautiful hair, and very strong, very masculine, with a golden energy. And it’s like you were the leader of something, and that you went on an expedition to do something, and it almost feels like that it was a spiritual cause for you. You return from this, you did it, and you feel mighty, you feel great, you feel... high, or something. You return with the feeling: I’m the greatest. I really did it. Meanwhile, in the city you departed from, something strange has happened. What you did is suddenly seen as annoying. Suddenly it is not appreciated at all, and among other things this has to do with the way you returned. you set yourself on a pedestal. Like... here I am! As a victor you came out of battle. And then an unbelievable reaction comes from the people you all did it for, it goes so far, they lock you up, you’re put in prison, you’re terribly humiliated in public, I see you as if you were pulled away in an open cage, with horses, a hooting crowd, these kind of things. You’re infuriated, you’re really infuriated... At that moment you’re terribly angry, really very, very angry, but you’re caged, you’re enchained, you can’t get rid of that energy. And you’re thrown in a dungeon, and it’s totally dark there, and in fact, nobody cares for you anymore. Once in a while food is thrown in, you’re sitting in that dungeon and you’re sitting there terribly long, and the feeling comes over you that you’re nothing, that you’re absolutely nothing. You’re getting smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller. And you’re left with the feeling that you’re nothing at all.

... It is as if from your anger you set on something like: one day I’ll get them, I’ll just show them... A general anger and disbelief in other people. You do something in accordance, you agree to do something in a certain way, and then all of a sudden they let you down. Such a disbelief in people. I see how behind that part of enlarging yourself, magnifying your strength actually, there is a longing to be here with your heart, to be here in an ordinary, easy, own way. It is as if this stems from before that whole story. In an easy, friendly way it emerges from your

heart chakra. That's what you really want. Simple love, simple being. I see you really being in contact with it too, simply loving yourself, simply loving life. I see tiredness at your being for always fighting and struggling. Yes, very old. Certainly in this life, but also in other lives."

To see

I had my aura read. In a small room three students of a center for intuitive development sat face to face to me. They told me the images that appeared before their minds' eyes, when they concentrated on who I am in essence. I had never understood anything about myself; psychotherapists left me unimpressed. This was something else. This went to the heart. I was happy. I went for a pizza.

I started to follow courses and subscribed for a training in aura reading. That summer I heard I was admitted. Of course, I knew such a training to be confronting. You meet yourself. Even before it started all kinds of things happened. Yet even more unexpectedly than I expected...

I will tell you about it. Caution: it's a strange story. I don't know whether you will make it till the end. The way you sit and read at the moment makes me doubt. We'll hit the deep immediately. There will be the devil to pay... Many of you will turn against me...

All right. Do I have assembled a bunch of headstrong souls? All ready for a journey through time and space? For vistas, fantasy, deep insight? Open the gates...

Extra

While waking up this crossed my mind: Machiavelli, he could have been an earlier life of mine. That morning I stayed at my parents'; I looked in the encyclopedia. I was startled. Earlier that summer I had shaved my head, then let my hair grow again. My eyes fell on an image of Machiavelli with exactly the same length and model of hair as I had at that moment. I was reading and in fact it seemed familiar to me. I went for a walk. Good gracious, Machiavelli?!

During my walk I wondered whether Machiavelli had ever met Dante. Machiavelli, so I read, had often visited Italian courts. Dante, I knew, had resided there. Had they ever met? Back home I found out how poor my knowledge of history was. Dante had lived two centuries earlier. Both were Florentine, both were concerned in city government, both were banned. No, now I must stop! I'm not the reincarnation of Dante. Impossible. Dante is a seize too big for me. However, the encyclopedia kept attracting me. What about the relationship between Dante and Virgil? Striking. As Machiavelli in his book *Il Principe* holds up Cesare Borgia as an example, as Dante in his *Divine Comedy* reserves a throne in heaven for Henry VII, Virgil gave Augustus a divine origin in his *Aeneid*. Following the line back from Dante and Virgil one thinks of Homer. Nothing is known about him.

The next morning while waking up, this crossed my mind: If you think of Homer, Shakespeare is one of them. Shakespeare! Someone who always seemed to me enwrapped with gloom. I never wanted to read his works.

I shut up. This was an insane fantasy. Don't talk about it! Madhouses are full of people who think they are Napoleon. This was extra, a fantasy, just for me.

Another morning, that summer. A few weeks later, again while waking up: I have always known I am the reincarnation of Goya.

I pored over books. I read about the above mentioned artists. I saw parallels in life and work... Was I on track of something; was it a delusion? Were these artists incarnations of the same soul? And what's all this got to do with me...?

Questions, dear reader, questions... Thirsty? Have a sip of water, and read... How will this end?

All right. Got some guts left? Ready for the next move? We'll go deeper into it. Let's find out whether we can form a picture of this all. I first present the basic knowledge, then more will follow. Come along... Vistas will smile before your eyes...

Rome

Julius Caesar got killed, Mark Antony held a funeral oration. Brutus and

the other conspirators fled town. Mark Antony, Lepidus and Octavius, Caesar's adopted son, joined forces. They killed many senators and took over power. Lepidus was set aside. And so there were two left. They fought as well. Octavius won. Now he was the Roman empire's unchallenged number 1. "The princeps". The man whose physical condition was subject to a host of ills and weaknesses had made it to the top. The title Augustus was bestowed upon him. Historians are ambivalent about Augustus. His actions were unscrupulous, he eroded the republic. On the other hand he proved to be a good principal. To quote the Britannica: "One of the great administrative geniuses of history". He ended the civil wars and secured the frontiers. His principate brought stability and prosperity. The pax Romana. His name lives on in the name of the month.

In a poem Virgil called upon his former fellow-student, Octavius, who by then had won power, to make peace. He received a commission to write the epic Aeneid about the founding of the Roman Empire. En passant he constructed a direct line between the Gods and Octavius, who acquired a divine origin that way. This was of great propagandistic value for the ruler. The Aeneid impressed. In later centuries it was regretted that Virgil had died before Jesus. He had missed a well-deserved place in heaven that way.

At a young age Virgil read out poems at a party at Cleopatra's. All the hairs in my aura bristled when I read this. As a child I wondered what Cleopatra had looked like. What a pity that such a person is gone forever, that one cannot meet her anymore... And now I read about that party at Cleopatra's... Did Virgil secretly have his eye on her?

Cleopatra committed suicide after her partner Mark Antony had lost battle against Octavius. Cesarion, a son of her and Julius Ceasar's, was wasted. Shakespeare wrote a play about it.

Firenze

Spesse fiate vegnonmi a la mente
le oscure qualità ch'amor mi dona,
e venmene pietà, sì che sovente

io dico: "lasso!, avviene elli a persona?";
ch'Amor m'assale subitanamente,
sì che la vita quasi m'abbandona:
campami un spirto vivo solamente,
e que'riman, perchè di voi ragiona.
Poscia mi sforzo, chè mi voglio atare;
e così smorto, d'onne valor voto,
vegno a vedervi, credendo querire:
e se io levo li occhi per guardare,
nel cor mi si comincia uno tremoto,
che fa de' polsi l'anima partire.

Dante, He madly loved Her, Beatrice - you can read about it in the Vita Nuova.

Florence was torn by party-strife. Dante, member of the Bianchi, was moderate. Unfortunately, his party was worsted, he was banned. In 1310 he met Henry VII. Dante expected him to unite torn up Italy. Henry VII had set his German house in order and went to Italy. To be crowned emperor. That, he felt, suited him. And indeed, he was crowned emperor. He failed while establishing his power. After an unsuccessful attempt to capture the city of Siena he was stricken ill with fever and died. This happened in 1313 near Siena. A missed chance, Dante felt. In his great poem that takes place in 1300, partly written after 1313, Dante reserved a throne in heaven for Henry VII. Dante called his work *La Commedia*, others added *Divina* to it.

Firenze

Niccolò Machiavelli, the Florentine republic's second chancellery's secretary, travelled a lot. One of his journeys was made to the court of duke Cesare Borgia. Borgia was, in an unscrupulous way, conquering the Romagna, under the protection of his father, pope Alexander the VI. He also threatened Florence. Just when Cesare was ill, the pope died. The duke lost his power. Later he was killed in a skirmish in Spain. This happened in 1507 near Viana. Aut Cesar, aut nihil. It turned out to be nihil – nil. Pisa freed herself from Florentine rule. Florence tried to reconquer Pisa. Many attempts failed. Machiavelli reorganised the Florentine army, after which

Pisa was reconquered – again lost her freedom.

The Florentine republic went down because of its unwillingness to take up arms. Machiavelli wrote *Il Principe* – the principal, leader, sovereign, prince, ruler. He also wrote a commentary on the first ten books of Livius, a history of Florence, a comedy, a short story, a study of the art of war - *dell'arte della guerra*, letters and frivolous carnival songs. A parody on the *Divina Commedia* remained unfinished. I quote the encyclopedia: "His style is excellent." Machiavelli in a letter to a friend: "I love my country more than my own soul." A portrait by Santi di Tito shows us the writer: twinkling eyes, half-smile. A brilliant kid. A little rascal

Machiavelli contemplates all kinds of situations, didn't make a system. He philosophizes like a Chinese. His heart longed for democracy, anarchy in his vision demands someone who constitutes himself as a leader. Whenever the Florentine describes the advantages of a strong rule it is in comparison with anarchy, never in comparison with democracy. In *Il Principe* Machiavelli presents a black vision. In an autocracy one person has the power, the other doesn't. This leads to envy, distrust, intrigues, murder and man slaughter. How to deal with this and at the same time be a good principal? The Florentine tried to find the answer.

Il Principe

Machiavelli deemed Cesare Borgia able to free Italy from foreign domination and bring peace to this country torn by war. *Il Principe* is partly a tribute to the killed duke. It includes a call to Lorenzo dei Medici "to take possession of Italy and free it from the hands of the barbarians" – one could say to take over Borgia's role.

"... without leader, without order, beaten up, plundered, torn up, overrun and fallen a prey to all sorts of destruction. (...) This opportunity to give Italy a liberator after such a long time shouldn't be missed. I can't say with how much love he would be received in all regions that have suffered from these floods of foreigners; with how much thirst for revenge, how much obstinate loyalty, how much devotion, how many tears. (...) For everybody loathes this foreign domination."

Machiavelli had ample political experience. He describes how to come into and remain in power, how to free Italy. Some of the advices in his hard headed manual make your hair bristle. In those days nobody was surprised by them. At a certain moment the Roman Catholic church realised that the things the Florentine wrote about pope Alexander VI and his son were not so nice – he wrote the truth. The book was put on the index. Machiavelli concludes *Il Principe* by quoting Petrarca:

against violence courage
will take up arms. And fighting will be brief.
For the ancient spirit
in Italian hearts did not yet die.

8

Shakespeare wrote sonnets and plays. Most sonnets are dedicated to a man, the others to a woman.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips are red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I on her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Shakespeare dedicated *Venus & Adonis* and *the Rape of Lucrece* to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. After an unsuccessful rebellion the earl was put in the Tower. Later he volunteered to fight for the United Provinces against Spain. Landing in the Netherlands he was attacked with

fever, he died a few days later. This happened in 1624 in Bergen op Zoom.

Some of Shakespeare's plays deal with struggle for power. Macbeth felt driven to seize power, after which things ran out of hand. They tell him his wife died.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Some of these plays deal with the struggle for power in Rome. Julius Caesar; Antony and Cleopatra. In King John, Shakespeare describes an indecisiveness in Angers resembling that which knocked off the Florentine republic. Machiavelli spoke bitterly about it. A recurring theme, I would say that he had not got over it. Anyhow, Shakespeare wrote: the murderous Machiavelli. A rare case of self-hatred? Troilus and Cressida is a parody on the Iliad. In this play the Greek took a lot of stick. Except for Ulysses. Shakespeare's method resembled Homer's. Steal and make it better.

Some Englishmen never believed that Shakespeare wrote his works himself. How can someone with so little education write pieces like that? They are right: Shakespeare's talent is completely incomprehensible. It came out of thin air, Horatio.

A quote from Antony & Cleopatra. Antony is speaking with his soothsayer. Caesar is Caesar Octavianus is Octavius, later called Augustus.

Antony. Say to me,
whose fortunes shall rise higher, Caesar's, or mine?

Soothsayer. Caesar's
Therefore, o Antony, stay not by his side:
Thy demon (that's thy spirit which keeps thy) is,
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable
Where Caesar's is not; but, near him, thy angel
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpower'd: therefore
Make space enough between you.

Antony. Speak this no more.

Soothsayer. To none but thee; no more, but when to thee.
If thou dost play with him at any game,
Thou art sure to lose; and, of that natural luck
He beats thee 'gainst the odds: thy lustre thickens,
When he shines by: I say again, thy spirit
Is all afraid to govern thee near him;
But, he away, 'tis noble.

Antony. Get thee gone:
Say to Ventidius, I would speak with him.
(*Exit Soothsayer*)
He shall to Parthia. Be it art, or hap,
He hath spoken true: the very dice obey him;
And, in our sports, my better cunning faints
Under his chance.

Majas

Goya was a career painter. Painting the portrait of Count de Floridablanca, prime minister of Spain, was important to him. He was never paid for this painting, but it led to an introduction to the king's brother and eventually Charles III, the king. As first court painter he made portraits of the royal family. His appreciation for Charles IV and his wife was not high, he portrayed them as he saw them. In letters the queen stated the likeness pleased her – more commissions of this nature failed to come. Goya painted a naked and a dressed maja. The dressed one I like most.

Goya stayed at Duchess d'Alba's, "the most beautiful woman in Spain." He painted her portrait, in the sand at her feet he wrote: "Solo Goya" Napoleon's troops occupied Spain, the Spaniards began a guerilla. During this war Goya travelled the country. He looked. What he saw he showed in etchings: *Los desastres de la guerra*. Leading a retired life in his country-house he painted the Black Paintings. Goya died in voluntary exile in France.

Pincturas Negras

Years before this story started I visited Madrid. I walked through the Prado. All at once I stood face to face with the Black Paintings. It was as if I went through the floor. I fell in a slough of black fever. I managed to reach a bench. I noticed others looked at the paintings as if nothing was going on.

Fiction

A king supported a poet. The poet wrote a few major works in honour of the king. In the epic's demi divine principal character, Ulysses, he incorporated traits of the king. Both were pleased. While reciting the poet always closed his eyes. With loving mockery he was called "the blind".

Eyes

The training in aura reading had begun. Now I sat in the opposite chair, described the images I saw. Dead scary in the beginning, slowly but surely I developed self-confidence. We, the students, also practised on each other. I held my tongue about my fantasy. I was curious whether images in my aura would complement it. And indeed, they told me things like: "Your eyes have seen to much." And: "In earlier lives writing a book was very important to you." I will give some quotations. We will leave the planet for a short while. There will be more adventures. Then I will round off the story with a confession.

Walls

"You were thrown in prison, accused of espionage. You pretended to be insane. That's how you escaped execution. They let you go, but you had to stay in town. So you were forced to go on pretending being insane, otherwise they would kill you after all. Always laughing, always joking." This made me think of Edgar, a character in King Lear. "The bloody procla-

mation to escape, that follow'd me so near (...) taught me to shift, into a madman's rags" It was as if the origin of the theme was found – in my aura! "In prison there were a lot of people. Dinner was served in one pot. You learned to eat quickly. Only at night there was room for your own thoughts."

Walls II

"One of the ways you... secured... your playfulness and humor in earlier lives... was... in monasteries. There you can play and be humoristic and don't have to think about everyday worries. There you mounted the playing-field of the cosmic, during prayer and choral singing, etc, etc."

One of those rays

"The way I see it... I see a sort of very big shining dome far in the distance, and a very big throne and I see a lot of staircases going up and there, as you see it, sits an enlightened being. I see a lot of rays coming from that enlightened being, all sorts of paths, in all kinds of directions, and it is as if you are one of those rays. As if you are an incarnating energy sent out by that being. At the same time I see another part of you, your own being, that clearly chooses to make contact with that being, a sort of marriage, to get an incarnation on that ray, and that's you. You're doing two things at the same time, on the one hand... gee, what's it like to incarnate, what's it like to be on earth, on the other you are manifesting the energy of that cosmic being, carry it out by your being. It's darting, it's very quick, very bright and very quick. Very mercurial. When I see it as a function, it is like you have a function as a messenger, as if your energy can bring so much lightness on earth. As if you are both experiencing the weight of the body, its materiality, and at the same time keeping that lightness."

The Light

One evening I was cleaning some energy, quite nasty energy, that had to do with the use of my intuition for struggle for power, in earlier lives. Then it occurred to me that I could meet God. Well, I was willing. A mighty intense light appeared before my eyes, I almost went out of my mind. It was the light where things come from. Because things come from the light, the light has sympathy for all things. This sympathy can be called love.

I was cut up for days.

One of those rays II

“I can’t remember what I said then. . . The way I see it, there are all sorts of strata around the earth, with stratosphere and things like that. . . There are also levels of consciousness, strata of consciousness. It is as if this level of consciousness is attached to the earth. It has to do with the earth’s ethical level of energy. It has nothing to do with politics, nothing with good and evil, it has to do with sense of beauty. Whatever you do down here, you always have the option to stay in contact with that energy.

There is neutrality in it, and a lot of understanding. Like I just said, it has no good and evil in it, it is much more comprehensive than that. And it is a level of consciousness you won’t find on earth, certainly not in our culture with all its good and evil. It’s a level that in itself doesn’t judge, but just provides information. . . much broader than that. It also strongly has to do with being able to see the magic of everything. The magic of life, the magic of a seed you chuck on earth and then there is at a certain moment a plant. That’s not beautiful or ugly, it’s much more than that. . . . The ethics of the miracle.”

Córdoba

After reading the first volume of a history of philosophy the name Averroës crossed my mind. I remembered that this name also occurs in the *Divina Commedia*, although not in which connection. So be it, I thought. But the name kept going through my mind. There was something about it. Back to the book, the books. Averroës proved to be the Latin name of Ibn Rusjd, born in 1126.

Ibn Rusjd was qadi in Córdoba and personal physician to the caliph. He wrote commentaries on Aristotle, whom he highly revered. His commentaries were in conflict with the Islam, his books were burned, he was banned. Later he was allowed to return and became qadi again, now in Marrakesh. For centuries Aristotle was the philosopher, Averroës a forbidden and influential commentator. One of his writings has the beautiful title: *Tahafut at Tahafut*, *Incoherence of the Incoherence*. It treats of the LAT-relationship between philosophy and religion. Averroës also wrote

about Plato's republic and about the Jihad, the "Holy War". State & War, themes we have seen before in this story.

Some time later I read about the following. Dante, a Christian, put in his great poem Mohammed in hell. Wrong faith, here you go! He made an exception for Averroës and Avicenna, they were found in limbo. Siger de Brabant, considered an averroist, went to heaven. Words of Siger were put in the mouth of Thomas Aquinas, a fierce opponent of Averroës. Dante, always careful, didn't let the anti-averroist sing his own song, on the contrary. A Muslim goes to hell in Dante, even though he is a prophet. He is spared this dire fate if he is a philosopher. This is, knowing Dante, understandable. It is also understandable that Siger de Brabant goes to heaven. A Christian, seemed to be on the side of an unchristian commentator, but: a philosopher. However, why that twisting of Thomas Aquinas's words? Usually it only happens from self-interested motives. What were Dante's motives?

Story

One day I got ill. Something urged me to write down everything I remembered from the books I had read. I got better and started to find out whether my memories corresponded with the books. I finished my training as an aura-reader. At a certain moment it was time to work my notes up into a story. After that I started to send it around. My silence is over...

To be honest I believe the story is true. It's no delusion, it is a revelation. Of course I mask my knowledge. There is no proof and moreover it is ridiculous. In your eyes. I tried to make the story amusing. Maybe the insights will survive in high spirits. Knowing too much is unhealthy, when it is in conflict with current beliefs. Unless you shut up. That's what I learned about this planet by now. This confession is made once-only. Yes, I will say it is nothing more than a literary trick. That's what it is. You better be silent about it. Of course you could say I seemed sincere when I made the confession, but who will believe you?

The story is brief, I know. With just a good encyclopedia you can find more similarities between the artists. Good luck, it's your business from now on... Beware of the Larousse, it gives you a lick and a promise. Just check for fun the inaccuracies about Machiavelli... Hallucinating it is, to

jump from one work to another. For instance from Rules for a Gay Society to Los Proverbios. Just find it out for yourself. . .

Old soul I am!

All right. Did the story broaden your mind? Did it open your eyes?

Here we must part. I hope the story was worth your dough. I wish you all the best. Ciao amica. . . Ciao, amico. . . At last I can go back to making paintings. For, oh, I forgot to tell you, I'm a painter.

Amsterdam, 1996

Vita Nuova. Original in Dutch: Ante Wessels, *Herkomst*, 1994, Translation: Ante Wessels. New lay out 2019 (org mode); I changed the titles *Muse* and *Muse II* to *One of those rays* and *One of those rays II*.

I have painted a series of portraits of Homer, Confucius, Virgil, Averroës, Dante, Machiavelli, Shakespeare & Goya.

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