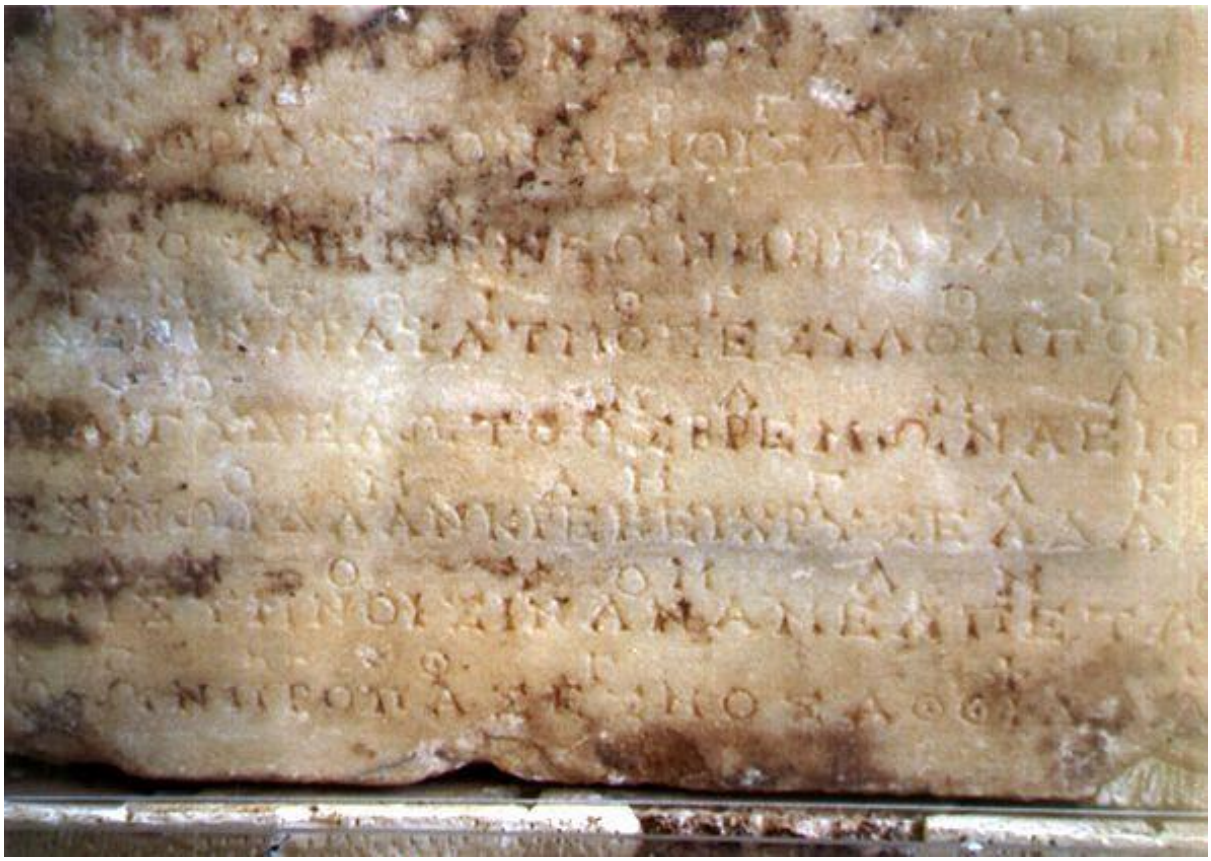
# What I believe

Gerry van Klinken[1]

*Sing first stanza of First Delphic Hymn to Apollo*

*Come forth, ye (Muses) that were allotted deep-forested Helicon, loud-booming Zeus' fair-armed daughters: come to celebrate your brother in songs. Phoebus of the golden hair, that over the twin peaks of this crag of Parnassus, accompanied by the famous maidens of Delphi, comes to the waters of the fair-flowing Castalian spring as he attends to the mountain oracle.*[2]



First Delphic Hymn to Apollo (Delphi Museum) (Wikimedia Commons)

This is the oldest piece of western music for which we have practically the complete text, with music, including the rhythm. It dates to 127 BCE. Its composer´s name was Athenaeus. He wrote it for the celebrations at the shrine to Apollo at Delphi. I have seen this stone in the museum there. Its pentatonism sounds primitive to us. The last stanza refers to the battle between Apollo, the beardless, athletic and youthful god of music, truth and prophecy, against the dragon Python. Order, action, and life, against chaos, inaction, death.[3] An Enlightenment symbol if you like.

[1] On the occasion of my farewell to KITLV, 12 June 2018.
[2] M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 288.
[3] Joseph Eddy Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

More Greece soon, but first I want to tell you about today´s title. “What I Believe” is pinched from a famous essay Bertrand Russell wrote in 1925. It contains these lines:

> My view is this: *The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge.* … Neither love without knowledge, nor knowledge without love can produce a good life.[4]

Credo has become an unfamiliar genre to us. It was popular between the world wars. Albert Einstein wrote one just as Hitler was rising to power.[5] It included the words, with which I can also identify: “Although I am a typical loner in daily life, my consciousness of belonging to the invisible community of those who strive for truth, beauty, and justice keeps me from feeling isolated.”

As farewell speech the credo is unusual, I agree. But for me it is a moment of introspection, of reconnecting my inner with my outer life. That connection is by no means straightforward.

Auguste Rodin, Gates of Hell (detail), approx.. 1890 (Musée Rodin) (Wikimedia Commons)

On the one hand, a What I Believe is widely seen as an obstacle to our work as social scientists, which is simply to discover the reality “out there”. We must get rid of the subjective “I”. Our own citizenship research program for example, which ventured out today into uncharted precolonial territories, still hasn´t really resolved the question often put to it: Aren´t you forcing your own democratic beliefs down the throats of others who might have different beliefs? This is positivism, and I think it bedevils the social sciences.

On the other hand, precisely our silence about what we personally believe might have helped nurture a flourishing moral relativism that says “whatever you believe, if it works for you, hey, go for

[4] Bertrand Russell (ed. Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn, introd. John G. Slater), *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell Classics* (London: Routledge, 2009).
[5] Albert Einstein, „My credo“, 1932 (http://www.einstein-website.de/z_biography/credo.html).

it!". This way lies today´s "post-truth" right-wing populism. We liberals have a lot to answer for in this regard, I fear.

Today´s credo is certainly no What I Have Always Believed. It´s a What I Think I Believe Today. Actually, it´s just Three Books I Have Read Recently That Helped Me A Lot".

## The self and the cosmos

It was the ancient Greek philosophers who first sensed the problem we are talking about. A very early Greek thinker said philosophy was "diving into yourself". If you do that, he wrote, you will find that the human self is much bigger than just one body. It is co-extensive with a world that far transcends the individual.[6] Philosophy was a personal activity. What they called philosophy, we would call *both* doing science *and* being generally cultivated, living the examined life. We still can´t live without that insight. "Jeder sei auf seine Art ein Grieche! Aber er sei's", wrote Goethe. "Everyone should be a Greek after their own fashion! But they should be one".[7]

As scholars, we describe our most basic beliefs with the word "theory". This is the scholarly What I Believe. (Theory thus contrasts with technical knowledge, such as how to fix a leaking tap). It was Plato who gave that word its present meaning. In the opening chapter of *The Republic* he tells a story about Socrates, his teacher. We find Socrates in the harbour near Athens. He has gone there to watch a sacred rite for a certain goddess. It is quite a spectacle - horses and torches at night. Afterwards some distant friends accost him and they spend the rest of the book discussing the ideal political community. Watching that rite, and then talking about it, is called Theoria. Theoria is originally the act of traveling to observe a sacred, perhaps even ecstatic, ritual, and traveling back to one´s community to talk about what it all meant.[8] Plato used that act as a metaphor for doing philosophy.

[6] Heraclitus, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fragments_of_Heraclitus, Fragments 101 and 45, discussed in Nightingale (2004 - see below) p13 fn 26. "Of soul you shall never find boundaries, not if you track it on every path; so deep is its cause".

[7] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Antik Und Modern," in *Berliner Ausgabe. Kunsttheoretische Schriften Und Übersetzungen [Band 17–22], Band 20* (Berlin: 1960 [orig 1818]): 232.

[8] Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).


Jan Saenredam, Plato's Allegory of the Cave, 1604 (Albertina) (Wikimedia Commons)

Theoria comes back again later in *The Republic,* in the fable about the cave. Inside, people are chained to the wall in such a way that they can only see the shadows of things happening outside. One of them, the philosopher, leaves the dark cave, becoming a Theoros, ie a person doing Theoria. The philosopher contemplates the light-drenched world outside, and comes to a rational understanding of it – mathematics, astronomy – marveling at regularities that are as beautiful as music. Then the philosopher returns, back into the cave, to complete the Theoria by trying to persuade the others to come out of the darkness. Theoria has been called "passionate sympathetic contemplation",[9] an act filled with wonder that is both personally transformative and politically relevant.

Human societies are also part of the cosmos. Anthropology is the perfect Theoria: go out, observe, be amazed, feel yourself changed, come back and talk about it. Everyone will think you are nuts, just like the cave-dwellers in *The Republic* did.

The German political philosopher Jürgen Habermas spelled out what this concept of Theoria means for the social scientist today:

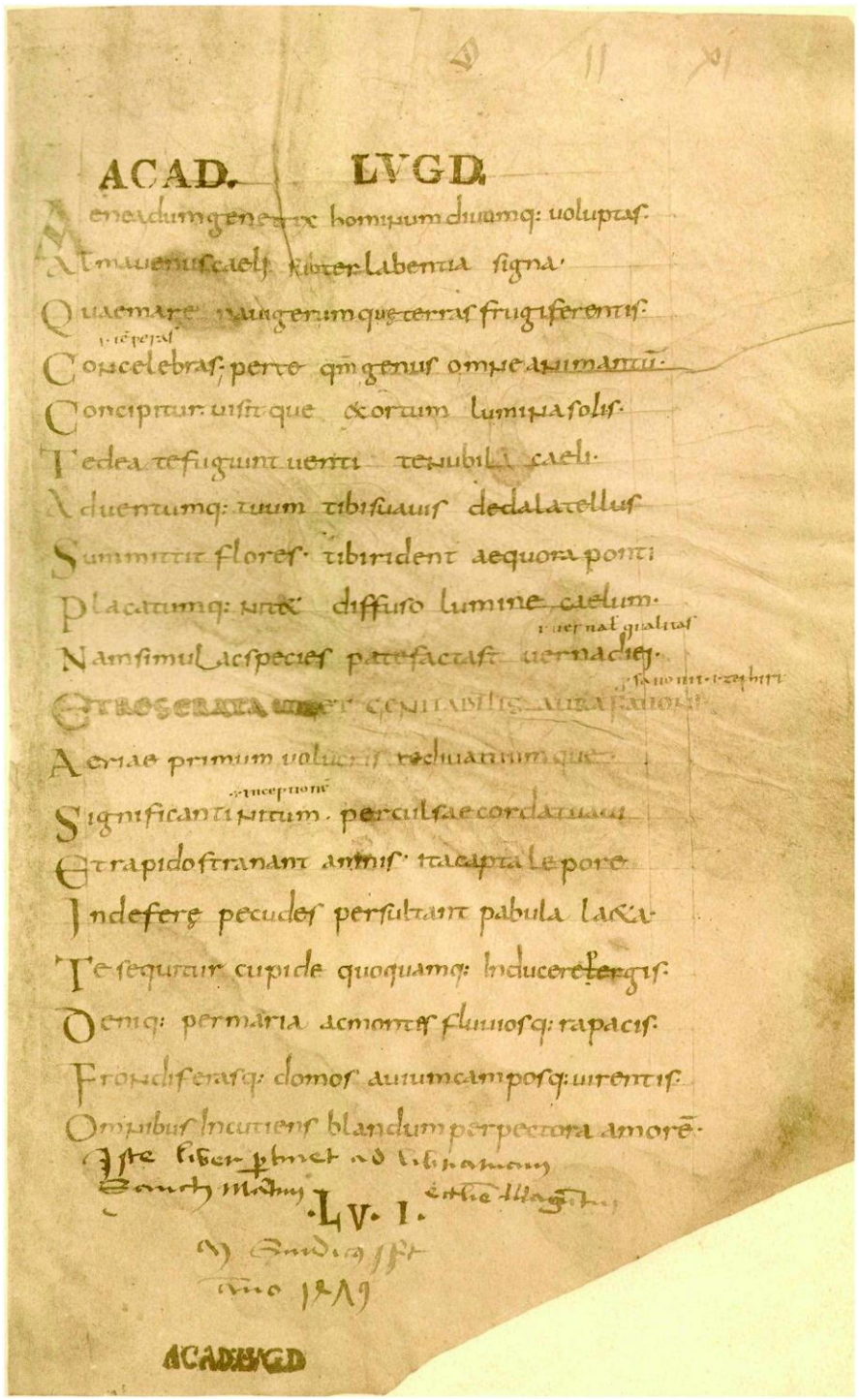
> "When the philosopher views the immortal order, he cannot help bringing himself into accord with the proportions of the cosmos and reproducing them internally. He manifests these proportions, which he sees in the motions of nature and the harmonic series of music,

[9] Francis Macdonald Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991 [orig 1912]).

within himself; he forms himself through mimesis [imitation]. Through the soul´s likening itself to the ordered motions of the cosmos, theory enters into the conduct of life."[10]

Sadly, modern science has severed this link with the conduct of life that Theoria implies, Habermas went on. In the original Theoria, it is not the thinking subject that is the problem – as modern positivists claim – but the impure passions that live in the breast of the subject. Theoria purifies those passions by directing the rational gaze at the cosmos.

## Stardust




[10] Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978 (Orig 1972)): 302.

Lucretius, first page of On the Nature of Things (Codex Oblongus, 9th century CE, Leiden University)[11]

Now, what is this cosmos like of which we are a part? From *The Republic* we skip forward to the Roman poet Lucretius. He wrote his long poem *On the Nature of Things* in about 50 BCE. The book was nearly lost for ever. We know practically nothing of its author. The Christian Middle Ages copied many old books but nearly succeeded in condemning this one to death by neglect. When a Renaissance book hunter came across just one forgotten old manuscript of it in a southern German monastery, he remembered he had heard rumours of it, and had it transcribed. Just as well he did, because that original since vanished. Later another early ninth century copy turned up somewhere else, and it now lies a couple of hundred metres from here in the Leiden University Library.

When the newly rediscovered poem by Lucretius began to circulate in the Christian culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its impact was nothing short of revolutionary. Stephen Greenblatt´s book *The Swerve* tells this story with gusto.[12] Into a religious world governed by a personal God, into a philosophical world barricaded against materialism by centuries of Platonic-Aristotelian arguments, came Lucretius to say: You are deluding yourselves. The world is made of atoms, buzzing this way and that, without any particular interest in humans. No one is in charge. Even now Lucretius has the power to excite.

> "This world is the product of Nature, the happenstance
> Of the seeds of things colliding into each other by pure chance
> In every possible way, no aim in view, at random, blind,
> Till sooner or later certain atoms suddenly combined
> So that they lay the warp to weave the cloth of mighty things:
> Of earth, of sea, of sky, of all the species of living beings"[13]

I first read the atomic philosopher on 4 July 2012. Inside the cover of my copy I wrote: on this day the Higgs Boson is discovered, the ultimate particle in modern science. I wondered why it took me so long to discover this enchanting book. Science has largely come to think in Lucretian ways. The dance of those exceedingly tiny yet simple atoms, bouncing around in empty space, really does explain the entire observed world.

Lucretius fulminates against mystification, against the idea that we must fear and obey supernatural forces we cannot understand. Like the Theoros in Plato, Lucretius urges his hearers to leave behind childish myths, but to observe and imitate nature. Knowledge drives out fear:

> "Just as children shudder at everything in black of night,
> So sometimes things we are afraid of in the broad daylight
> Are only bugbears such as tots dread in a darkened room,
> And therefore we must scatter this terror of the mind, this gloom,
> Not by the illuminations of the sun and his bright rays,
> But by observing Nature´s laws and looking on her face."[14]

[11] D. Butterfield, "A sketch of the extant Lucretian manuscripts", pp5-45 in *The Early Textual History of Lucretius' De rerum natura* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[12] Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).
[13] Lucretius (transl. Martin Ferguson Smith), *On the Nature of Things* (Indianopolis/ Cambridge: Hackett, 2001 [1969]): II.1060-65.
[14] Lucretius, op cit, II.55-60.

The French humanist Montaigne read those parts of *On the Nature of Things* over and over. The copy of it from his personal library is full of annotations. Montaigne was tearing his hair out knowing how to respond to the appalling religious wars between sixteenth century Catholics and Huguenots. Lucretius gave him answers.[15] Lucretius stood at the heart of Karl Marx´s doctoral thesis. One scholar wrote that Marx saw in Lucretius "a lever that might help to dislodge simplistic religious beliefs; a task he came to believe, with Feuerbach and the Hegelian Left, to be among the most pressing of his own time".[16]

How much fearful ignorance in the world today is still in need of Lucretius! Think of the climate change denier, burying his frightened head in the sand; of the Indonesian kyai who incites violence against homosexuals; of the Burmese monk doing the same against a Muslim minority; of Trump banning Muslims from entering his country. The number of theocracies around the world is not declining; the caliphate has an appeal it has not had for a hundred years. South Asia and our own Southeast Asia belong, with Africa, to the most "believing" parts of the world. The correlation between religiosity and poverty is positive and strong.[17] Progressive politics in Indonesia have over the last ten years had to concede huge territory to a conservative religious backlash, culminating last June in a jail sentence for Jakarta´s governor Ahok for blasphemy. I finally abandoned the last remnants of my Christian belief while writing my *Small Town Wars* book about the Christian-Muslim wars in Maluku. All this is a betrayal of the universe, and of life. Like the Theoros in Plato´s *Republic*, we social scientists come into these religious societies as if we are aliens, as if demented.

Yet Lucretius is by no means bleak. A passionate vitality lights up his poem from within. It opens with a highly erotic poem to the Love that transfuses all of nature:

> "All through the seas and mountains, torrents, leafy-roofed abodes
> Of birds, and greening meadows, your delicious yearning goads
> The breast of every creature, and you urge all things you find
> Lustily to get new generations of their kind.
> Because alone you steer the nature of things upon its course"[18]

Immortality is a religious illusion. But even death has beauty. When we die, Lucretius says, our bodies, nurturer of our minds, dissolve into a myriad atoms. They scatter in the earth and the air. Our atoms are stardust.

> "We all arise from seed celestial,
> Because the same sky overhead is father of us all"[19]

Shakespeare loved Lucretius. He must have remembered this line when he had Juliet wish that, after death, night should take her beloved Romeo:

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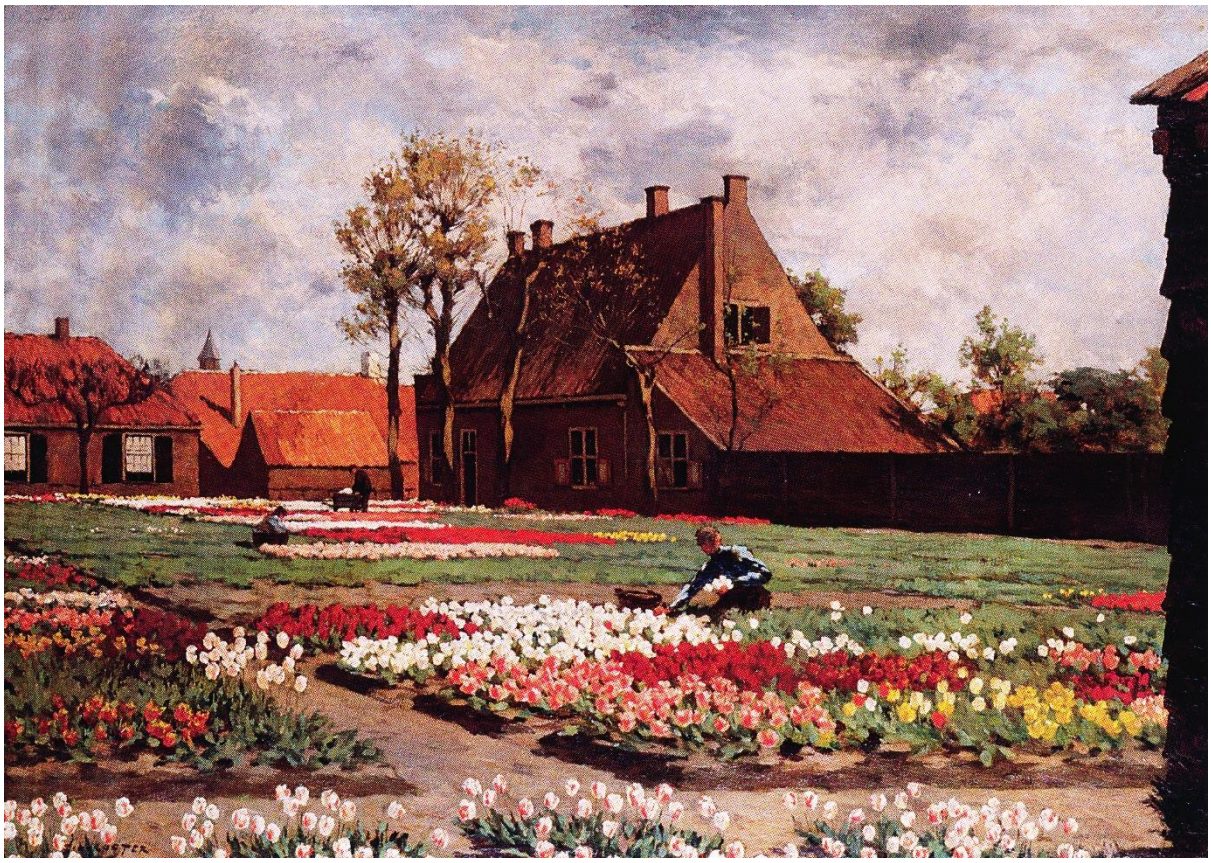
[15] Stuart Gillespie and Philip Hardie, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[16] S. S. Prawer, *Karl Marx and World Literature* (London: Verso, 2011 [1976]).
[17] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Importance_of_religion_by_country; http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/03/12/how-do-americans-stand-out-from-the-rest-of-the-world/.
[18] Lucretius, op cit I.18.
[19] Ibid II.991.

"And cut him out in little stars
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night"[20]

This sense of wonder in Lucretius led the Italian novelist Italo Calvino to say that *On the Nature of Things* was "the first great work of poetry in which knowledge of the world tends to dissolve the solidity of the world, leading to a perception of all that is infinitely minute, light, and mobile".[21]

## Ethics



Antonie Louis Koster, The house of Benedictus de Spinoza at Rijnsburg amidst flowering tulip fields, approx. 1915 (Wikimedia Commons)

So how do I *live* in this world that is abuzz with random atomic motions? Baruch Spinoza was Holland´s most famous philosopher. His house in Rijnsburg, twenty minutes cycling from here, is now a small museum. This is where between 1661 and 1663 he started his magnum opus *Ethics*. By day, he ground lenses for Christian Huygens. In the evening he studied. He never had a family. One of the most remarkable things about Spinoza is that he dared to call his book *Ethics.* He knows as well as Lucretius did that we and the world are made of matter, and that there is no supreme legislator, judge and father in the sky to tell us what to do. Yet he doesn´t call his book something metaphysical like *Ontology*; he calls it *Ethics*. Whatever the importance of his speculative

[20] Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, III.ii.22-24.
[21] Italo Calvino (trans. Patrick Creagh), *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (New York: Vintage, 1988).

propositions, he wants to say, you can only judge them at the level of the ethics that they imply.[22] Lucretius didn´t believe in politics, and had little to say about ethics, but for Spinoza politics was the whole point. Gilles Deleuze, the exciting French philosopher who died in 1995, called Spinoza "the Christ of the philosophers."[23]

Although few fully fathom his thought, everyone loves Spinoza. Some have likened the *Ethics* to a "musical work". Deleuze again:

> "Writers, poets, musicians, filmmakers – painters too, even chance readers – may find they are Spinozists; indeed, such a thing is more likely for them than for professional philosophers… Many commentators have loved Spinoza sufficiently to invoke a Wind when speaking of him. And in fact no other comparison is adequate."[24]

His philosophy is too complex to talk about sensibly in a farewell speech dressed up as a credo. But I can lift out two basic elements, and then reflect on what that means for our life together as humans, which includes the life of the Asian societies we study.

The most fundamental part of it is that the universe is a single, infinite, eternal, necessarily existing substance. He called it "God, or Nature". Spinoza naturalises God. Everything is part of nature. There is no god outside nature. There are no exceptions to the laws of nature. No supernatural being creates stuff out of nothing, sets the mechanism turning, intervenes in response to the prayers of the faithful, legislates what is and is not allowed morally, or sets to right what has been done wrong at the end of time. We are as much – no more, but also no less - part of the natural here and now as the animals.

In this, Spinoza was no different to Lucretius. Yet just that part alone could have gotten Spinoza into serious trouble in seventeenth century Netherlands – remember the lynching of the de Witt brothers (1672). It can get you a jail sentence or a vigilante beating in Indonesia today. But there is more to Spinoza.

[22] „Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995)", *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (https://www.iep.utm.edu/deleuze/).
[23] Ibid.
[24] Gilles Deleuze and (transl. Robert Hurley), *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988 (orig Fr 1970)).: 127-130


Book case in Spinoza House with among others Descartes (photograph by Olwen Harkema, http://olwenharkema.com/blog/, 31 January 2015)

The key to his *Ethics* are the human passions. The whole of society, all of politics, hangs together relationally through the desires that people evoke in each other. The most fundamental human drive, writes Spinoza, is the striving to persevere in one´s existence.

In life, we have different kinds of encounters with other bodies. Good ones empower us to persevere in our existence. These create passions of joy. Love, collaborative research, democratic consultation, international cooperation – these strengthen our powers to persevere in our existence. Joy enables us to expand freely to the limits that nature sets on our existence. (For true freedom is not living without limits but learning to live along the grain of those natural limits.)

However, we also have bad encounters. These lead to passions of sadness. Hate, envy, remorse, and subservience to others weaken our powers to persevere in our existence. The rational individual will know how to distinguish good from bad encounters. Producing as many good encounters as possible helps everyone to persevere in their existence. What helps me helps everyone. Win-win.


Statue of the brothers de Witt, Dordrecht, 1918 (Wikimedia Commons)

What does this imply for politics? Spinoza was intensely interested in the politics of the Dutch Republic. As he wrote, the struggle deepened between a provincial Calvinist and Orangist public on the one hand, and an urban, secular trading aristocracy on the other. In a highly political book he published during this struggle (the *Theological-Political Treatise*) he effectively asked, as Deleuze put it, "Why are the people so deeply irrational? Why are they so proud of their own enslavement? … Why does a religion that invokes love and joy inspire war, intolerance, hatred, malevolence, and

remorse?"[25] He feared the religious monarchists might win, as indeed they did. Yet he never answered his own question by saying, "I side with the secular republicans; the threat of stupidity is too great; we will simply suppress those benighted provincials who want to set up an authoritarian theocracy." Instead, he believed in democracy even in the worst of times.

The affects of joy and sadness lie at the basis of all of Spinoza´s politics. Ethics come about because humans who live this way realise it is to their and everyone else´s advantage to work together. The joy of expanding does not permit envy or hate of others, nor the wish that they should not succeed. That would be a "sad passion", an expression of weakness, the opposite of joy. Only joy is worthwhile. Joy takes pleasure in sharing the knowledge of nature one has acquired. Thus free citizens agree together to build a republican state in which everyone is enabled to live in freedom.

You sense now, I hope, why Spinoza is for me, as for so many, the inspiration for a better life today. His is a philosophy for radical democracy in an age of right-wing populism. It is also a philosophy for radical cosmopolitanism in an era of growing nationalist and religious chauvinism. And, by no means an afterthought, it is a philosophy for deep ecology in an age of climate disaster. The relations upon which Spinoza builds his *Ethics* also embrace non-human entities. For nothing distinguishes us from those non-human dimension of nature.

Albrecht Dürer, The large turf, 1503 (Albertina) (Wikimedia Commons)

## What I believe

The *amor intellectualis Dei*, the intellectual love of "God or Nature" that suffuses Spinoza, the joyful passions that drive his Ethics, these bring us back to Bertrand Russell. *The good life is one inspired by*

[25] Ibid.: 10

*love and guided by knowledge.* They are a long way removed from Max Weber´s barren *Entzauberung*, the sober scientific disenchantment that separates our world from the religious fantasies of premodern times. We have come full circle. Let me just step back over the three stops I made today in my quest to reunite my self with the social science work that I do. At each stop, some blockage was overcome that stood in the way.

In Plato´s *Republic,* I discovered "theory". Truth, true knowledge, does not come through revelation from beyond this world. Neither does it come from some body of truth existing by itself outside the human theoros, as positivists have long said. It comes only through the observing action of the *theoros*, who engages in "passionate sympathetic contemplation". It is an act filled with a sense of wonder.

In Lucretius´ *On the Nature of Things,* I saw the materiality of nature. The blockage Lucretius removed was the one I had inherited from the Christian Middle Ages – which says that obedience always comes first; that, as one Catholic teaching has it, "curiosity is sometimes damaging".[26] I really am made of so many atoms, whose electrons, protons and neutrons are exactly like those that make up the stars. Nature is the horizon of our field, also in the social sciences. There is poetry in this, too, as we saw.

From Spinoza´s *Ethics,* I learned that a good life, an emancipative politics for our society and our environment, is possible within this plane of immanence that is "God or Nature". The blockage here are the "sad passions" that litter this world. Such passions lead to bad encounters marked by hate and envy. Instead, rational understanding privileges good encounters. It incentivises political action that compounds our relations with others rather than decomposing them. This empowers both myself and those with whom I come into contact.

## Goodbyes

Now the farewells, even if they are not final. I started work at KITLV on 18 November 2002, at Henk Schulte Nordholt´s invitation. He had moved into his office exactly a week earlier. The little research division we started grew and eventually gobbled up the entire institute. Since then I have come to know probably hundreds of scholars here and around the world - "the invisible community of those who strive for truth, beauty, and justice", as Einstein said. What a life we lead! Spinoza will not allow me to use the word "envy", but I can say for a fact that many colleagues outside the KITLV are blue with it. Hours, months, years of thinking, reading, writing, discussing, visiting the field. Room 138 followed by De Grote Beer - like Plato´s alcohol-soaked *Symposium*. All good encounters. I had no idea a researcher´s job involved so much exotic travel – learning from Indonesians and Burmese and Canadians and Australians, living like a stranger, like a Theoros.

I have to skip over the sweat expended by the half-marathoners, rowers, jazz dancers and ping-pong players in this institute; over the love matches that blossomed and sometimes faded again; the annual wrestle with the demountable Christmas tree while Fridus was cooking up another culinary extravaganza for 35 places. I can´t mention the old reading room, right here, where Rini and

[26] "[T]he concept can be enlarged to a general custody of all impulses that have the potential to lead us to sin. Perhaps we might think of it as a ´custody of the mind´, in which we refrain from asking questions about matters that either we cannot resolve or are within the purview of others to resolve. Especially when our questions are not about our own welfare or the welfare of others whom we can truly help, we should remember that curiosity is sometimes damaging („Custody of the mind", *Catholic Answers*, 8 January 2014, https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/custody-of-the-mind).

Josephine watched jealously over “their” collection and where you could meet a Helen Creese or a famous Indonesian without warning.

But I must mention four individuals and one group who have been especially important to me. For each of them I have chosen a picture, which I will carry with me in my head.

JMW Turner, Apollo and Python, 1811 (Tate Modern) (Wikimedia Commons)

Ward Berenschot. Unbelievable as it seems, my first email exchange with you goes back only ten years. To congratulate you on the birth of Kas, and set up a first discussion. I had been most impressed with your dissertation. Today you are my closest colleague, and my friend. The rate at which you think up new projects grows faster each year. Or am I slowing down? For you, a picture you already know, because I gave you a copy of it for your 40th last year. It is JMW Turner´s *Apollo and Python*, done in 1811 to represent the Enlightenment. The beardless one who strives against chaos, inaction, and death.

Henk Schulte Nordholt, you made it all happen, how can I thank you enough? You have been a good boss. Tough when reports are not in; ready to shoot for the moon to finance a good research idea. Your old-boys networking skills are legendary. With Margreet at Burgemeester Boreelstraat you are the most generous host and hostess I know. Mainly I will remember the good cheer. Many a looming fight seems to blow over when Henk makes a joke about it.

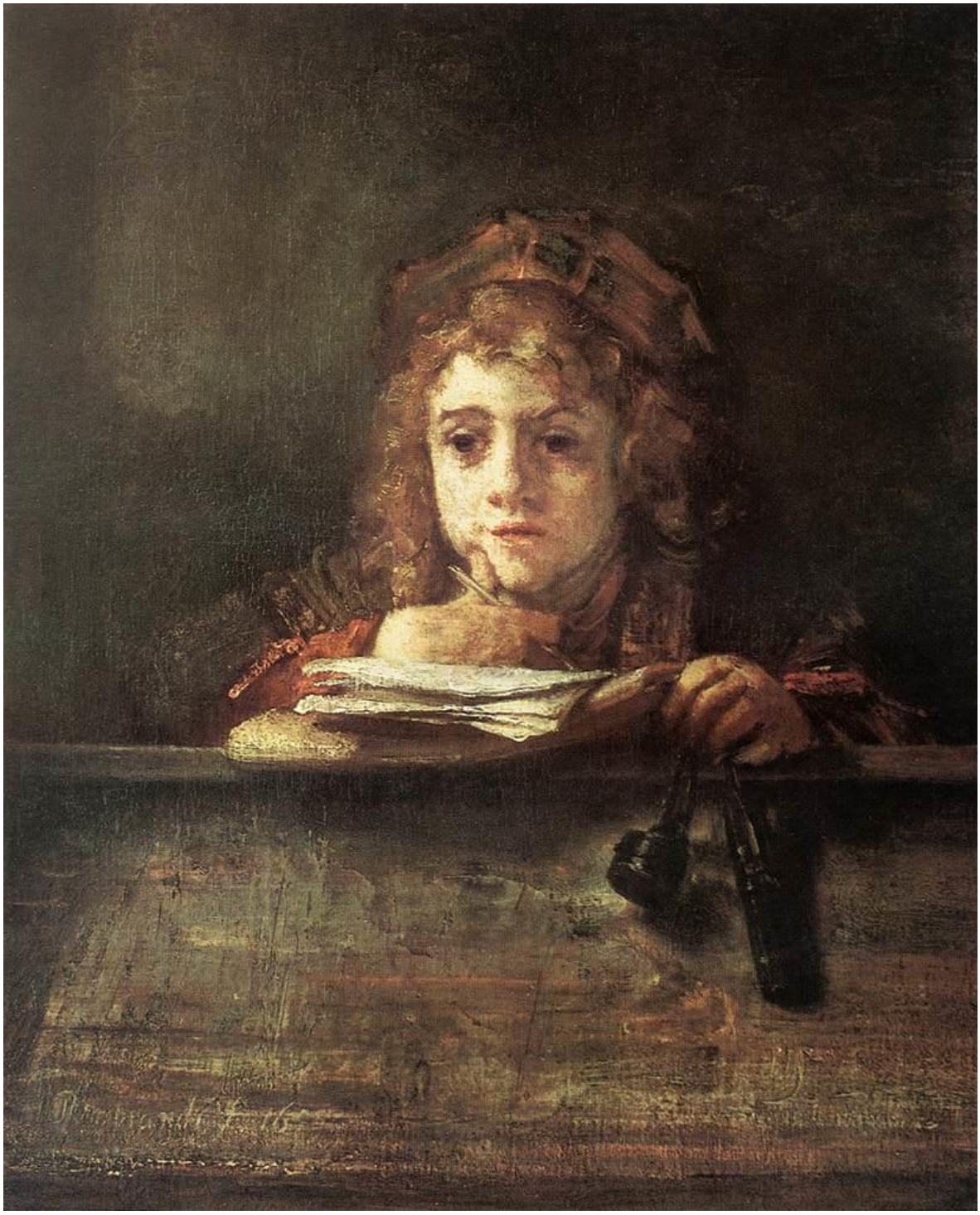
Frans Hals, Laughing cavalier, 1624 (Wallace Collection) (Wikimedia Commons)

The Laughing Cavalier, from Haarlem of course, fortuitously also reminds me of something else: the cavalier manner in which finances were invariably calculated – rounded off to the nearest couple of thousand euros on the back of an envelope – which two years later would trigger rage among the accountants.

Master of Ottobeuren, Aristotle and Phyllis, approx. 1523 (Bavarian National Museum) (photograph by Gerry van Klinken)

Dear Yayah Siegers. Nothing better illustrates the power of woman in general, and the power of Yayah Siegers over her “philosophers” in this institute in particular, than this 1523 wood carving. I saw it in Munich recently. The story of it was popular in the Middle Ages. The philosopher Aristotle, the greatest male intellect in the world, arrives at court to teach the young Alexander the Great. He warns Alexander´s father against the dangers of feminine wiles. But, emotionally clumsy as he is, he ends up himself falling under the spell of that man´s mistress Phyllis, and doing her bidding. This not only illustrates how many people are secretly a bit in love with Yayah, but also the extent to which we are all dependent on you for most of the important practical things in our lives. Mutatis mutandis the same could be said of Ellen, Jeannette, and Christian, but I think you get what I want to convey.

The group are my PhD students: Hoko, Fajri, Grace, Vita, and (in Indonesia) Prio, Retna, and Zamzam. Don´t worry, this is not goodbye. You are all super-bright, life is more fun with you than without you.



Rembrandt, Titus at his desk, 1655 (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen) (Wikimedia Commons)

I see you all like this - pensive, a little pale from lack of sleep, with the pen hovering over the half-written paper. I do hope you will all live longer than Rembrandt´s son Titus did.

Finally, my wife of 42 years, Helene van Klinken.

Peter Paul Rubens, The Artist and his first wife, Isabella Brant, in the honeysuckle bower, 1609 or 1610 (Alte Pinakothek) (Wikimedia Commons)

My lover, my traveling mate, my running companion, my Tove, my Isolde, my Ann Trulove, my bride. A good encounter. What more can I say?

[ends]