



THE STOICS

9. Spinoza

VANA SALVS OMNIBVS
MEMOR ESTO QVONIAM MORS NON TARDAT ET TESTAMENTVM
INFERORVM QVIA DEMONSTRATVM EST TIBI TESTAMENTVM
ENIM HVIVS MVNDI MORTE MORIETVR

OMNIA SVO PROVENIYNT TEMPORE ATQVE TRANSEVNT ECCLESIASTICI
CAP.
ANTE MORTEM NE LAVDES HOMINEM QVENQVAM
QVONIAM IN FILIIS SVIS AGNOSCITVR VIR. ECCLESIASTICI CAP. II

PERCIVALLVS SMALPACE ARMIGER
OBIIT 2^o DIE FEBRVARI A^o DNI
1558 R ELIZABETA REGNANTE
CVIVS QVIDEM CORPVS IYXTA
HVNC TVMVLVM HYMATVM
EXISTIT

AGNES VXOR EIVS ET FILIA
IOHIS TEBOWLD ARMIGERI OBIIT
TERCIO DIE SEPTEMBRIS A^o DNI
1588 R ELIZABETA REGNANTE
CVIVS QVIDEM CORPVS IYXTA
HVNC TVMVLVM HYMATVM
EXISTIT

LIBERI INTER EOS MICHAEL ET THOMAS
ADHVC VIVENTES QVI IN RELIGIOSA MEMORIA
OPTIMORVM PARENTVM SVORVM HOC
MONVMENTVM POSERVNT

MORIENTI CVNCTA QUIESCUNT
BEATI QVI MORIVNTVR IN DOMINO



BEHOWLDE YOVRE SELVES BY VS SYTCHE ONCE WERE WE AS YOV
AND YOV IN TYME SHALBE EVEN DVSTE AS WE ARE NOW



STOIC

Transience

Disposition

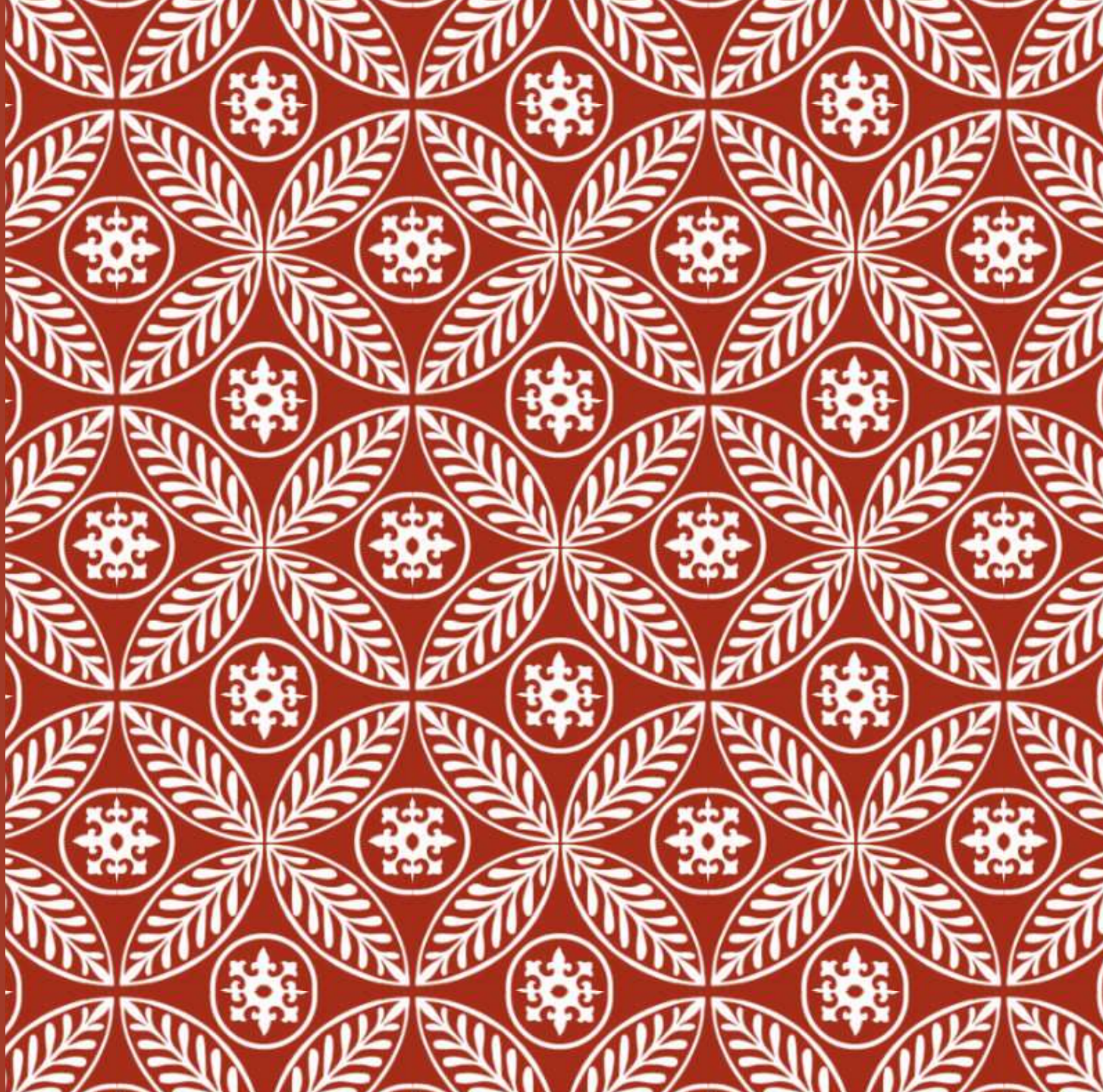
Fate

STOIC

Self-Knowledge

Compassion

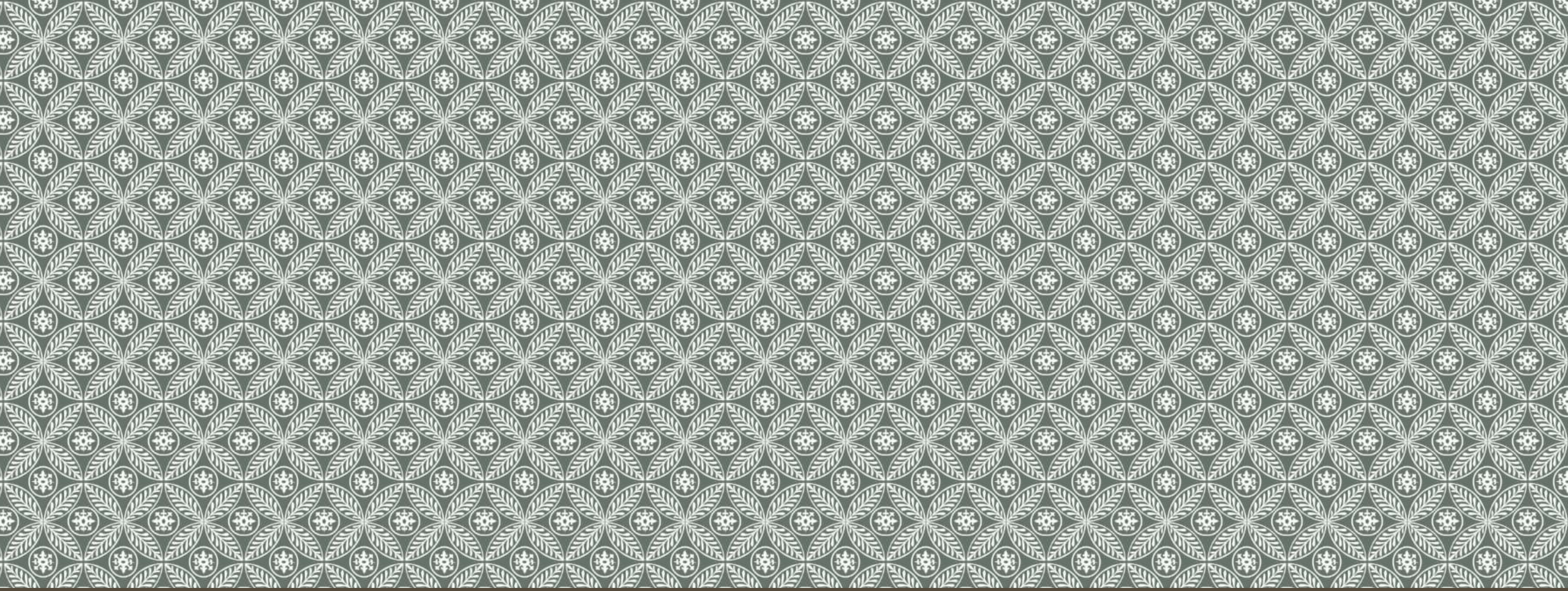
Living with Nature



AGENDA

1. Introducing Spinoza
2. The God of Spinoza
3. Desire
4. Servitude
5. Blessedness





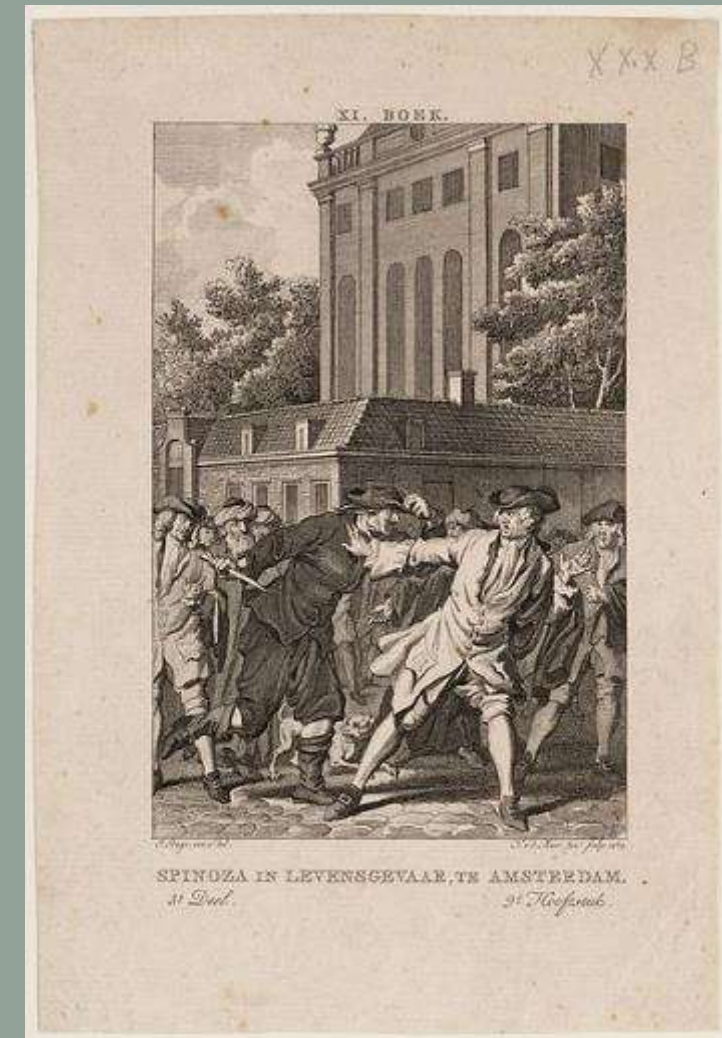
1. INTRODUCING SPINOZA

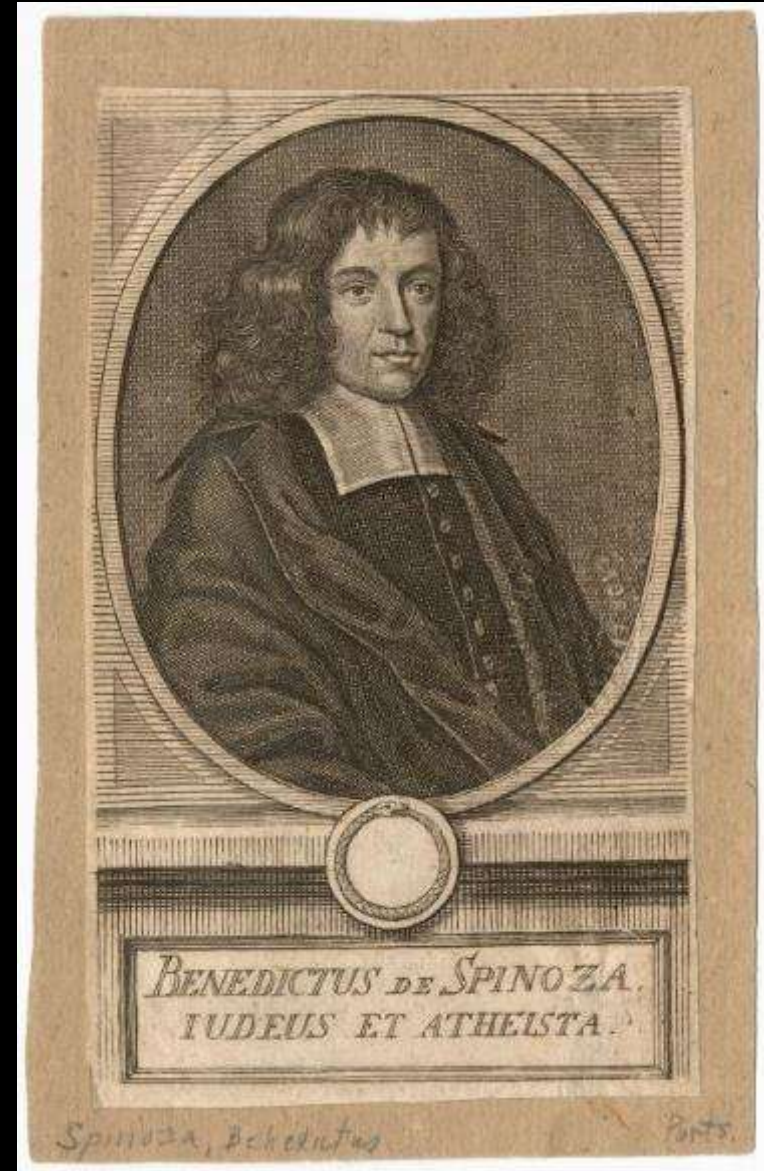
‘it is a book full of studious abominations and an accumulation of opinions which have been forged in hell, which every reasonable person, indeed every Christian should find abhorrent.’

- Willem van Blijenbergh

‘I have read the book by Spinoza. I am saddened by the fact that such a learned man has, as it seems, sunk so low. The critique that he launches against the holy books has its foundations in the *Leviathan* of Hobbes, but it is not difficult to show that it is often defective. Writings of this sort tend to undermine the Christian religion, consolidated by the precious blood, sweat and vigilance of martyrs. If only they can stimulate someone equal to Spinoza in erudition but exceeding him in his respect for Christianity to refute his numerous paralogisms and his abuse of eastern letters.’

- Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz





SPINOZA IN A NUTSHELL

Benedictus de Spinoza, 1632-1677

Dutch philosopher and lens-grinder

Renowned for his grasp of Descartes
and unconventional views on God

Major works include the *Ethics* (1677) and
Theological-Political Treatise (1670)

Makes some of the most strident claims for
philosophical and political freedom in the history of
thought





SPINOZA'S KEY WORKS

Principles of Cartesian Philosophy (1663)

Theological-Political Treatise (TTP, 1670)

Ethics (1677)

Political Treatise (1677)

He also wrote a *Hebrew Grammar*, *Letters*, and two early works, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and *Short Treatise Concerning God, Man and his Well-being*



Im 020 B. D. S. *Kw. 366C4*
OPERA
POSTHUMA,

*Quorum series post Præfationem
exhibetur.*



CLC LXXVII.



De Nagelate
SCHRIFTEN

van
B. D. S.

Als

ZEDEKUNST,
STAATKUNDE,
VERBETERING van 't Verstant,
BRIEVEN en ANTWOORDEN.

*Vit verscheide Talen in de Neder-
landsche gebragt.*



Gedrukt in 't Jaar M. DC. LXXVII.







DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

The Dutch United Provinces gain effective independence from Spain in 1585, with its 'Golden Age' lasting most of 17th century

Benefited from inward migration of skilled Protestant merchants and craftsmen from Southern Netherlands and France

Relative religious toleration attracted persecuted Jews from Portugal, Spain and Eastern Europe

Founded on maritime trade, shipbuilding and cloth manufacture



PHILOSOPHICAL TOLERATION

Liberal, urbanised, international-facing republic

‘Republic of Letters’

Patronage of arts and sciences, free publishing.

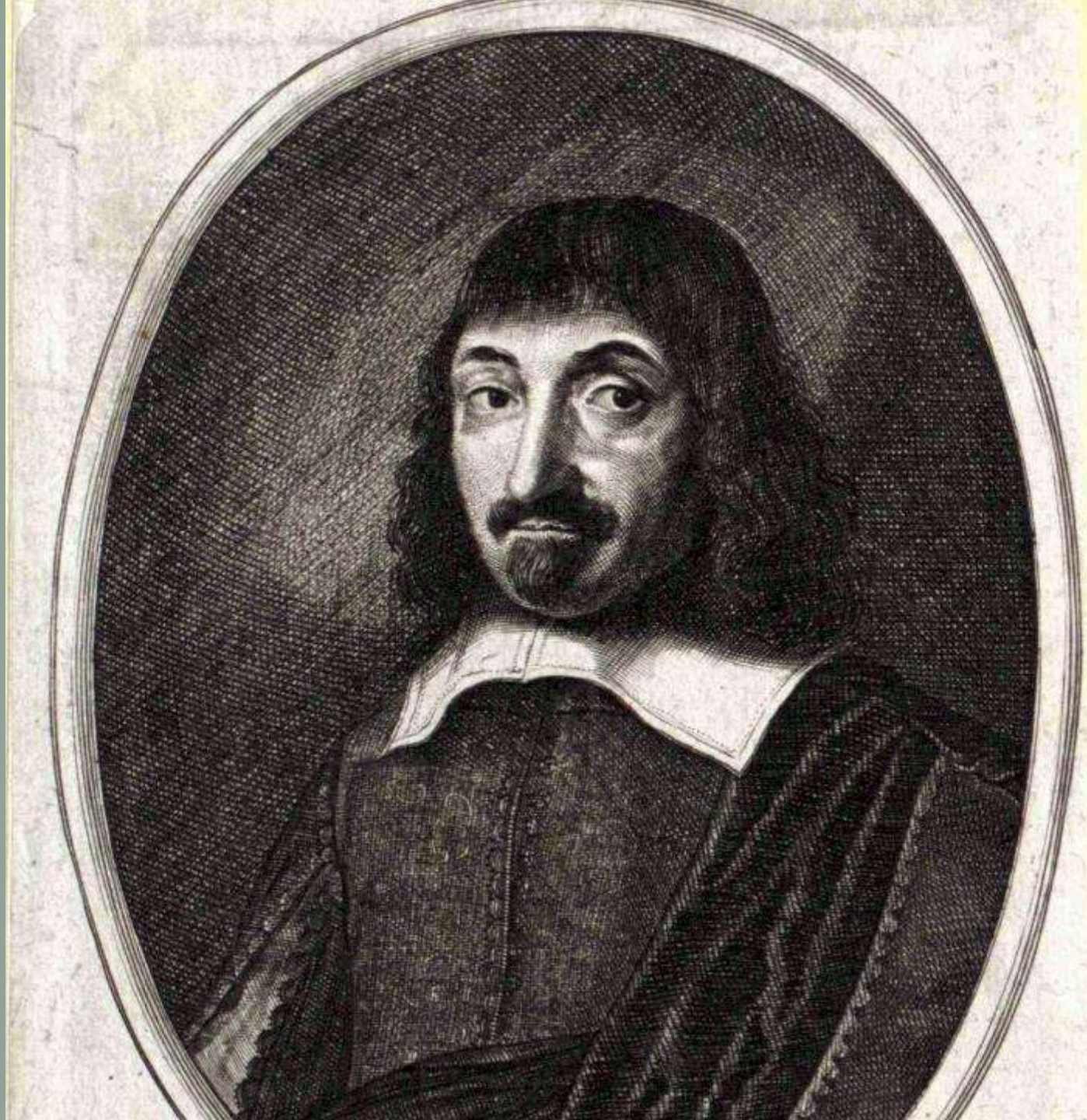
Descartes and Locke spend years here in exile

Flourishing of intellectual interest in new sciences and philosophy among circles of radical Protestants – Collegiants and Socinians – which Spinoza frequents

Friends with freethinkers like Lodewijk Meyer, Adriaen Koerbagh and Abraham van Berckel (*Leviathan*)

‘[A]nd where, in the midst of the crowd of a great and very busy people who are more concerned with their own affairs than they are curious about those of others, I have been able, without lacking any of the amenities to be found in the most bustling cities, to live as solitary and as withdrawn a life as I could in the remotest deserts.’

— Descartes, *Discourse on Method*



TREATISE ON THE EMENDATION OF THE INTELLECT

One of Spinoza's first surviving works
(1662-3)

The short, unfinished *Treatise* gives a
concise reflection into his motivations and
inner landscape

What are Spinoza's reasons for turning
to philosophy?



Rembrandt, "Portrait of a Jewish Young Man", 1648

'After experience had taught me the hollowness and futility of everything that is ordinarily encountered in daily life, and I realised that all the things which were the source and object of my anxiety held nothing of good or evil in themselves save insofar as the mind was influenced by them, I resolved at length to enquire whether there existed a true good, one which was capable of communicating itself and could alone affect the mind to the exclusion of all else, whether, in fact, there was something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity.'

- *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*

Seeking a true and perfect good...

Against those which are mortal or not up to us

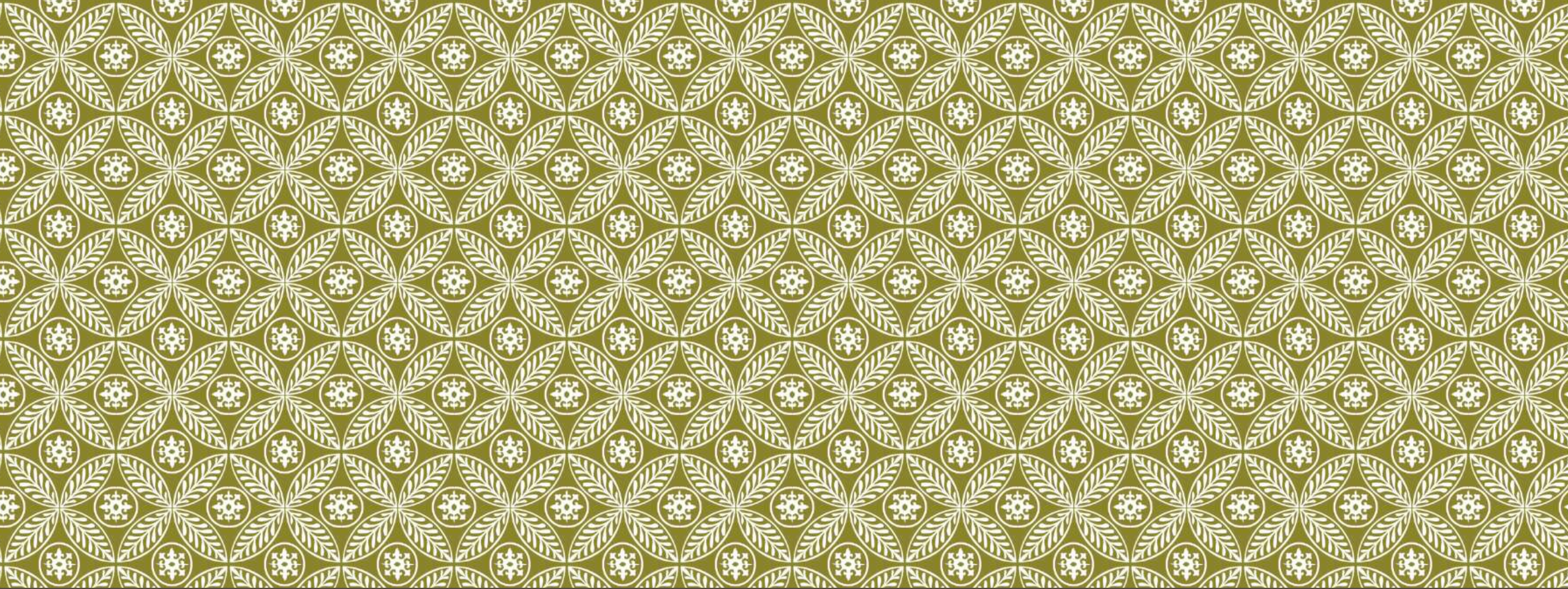
Rejection of wealth, honour and sensual pleasures

A turn to the life of the mind and understanding...

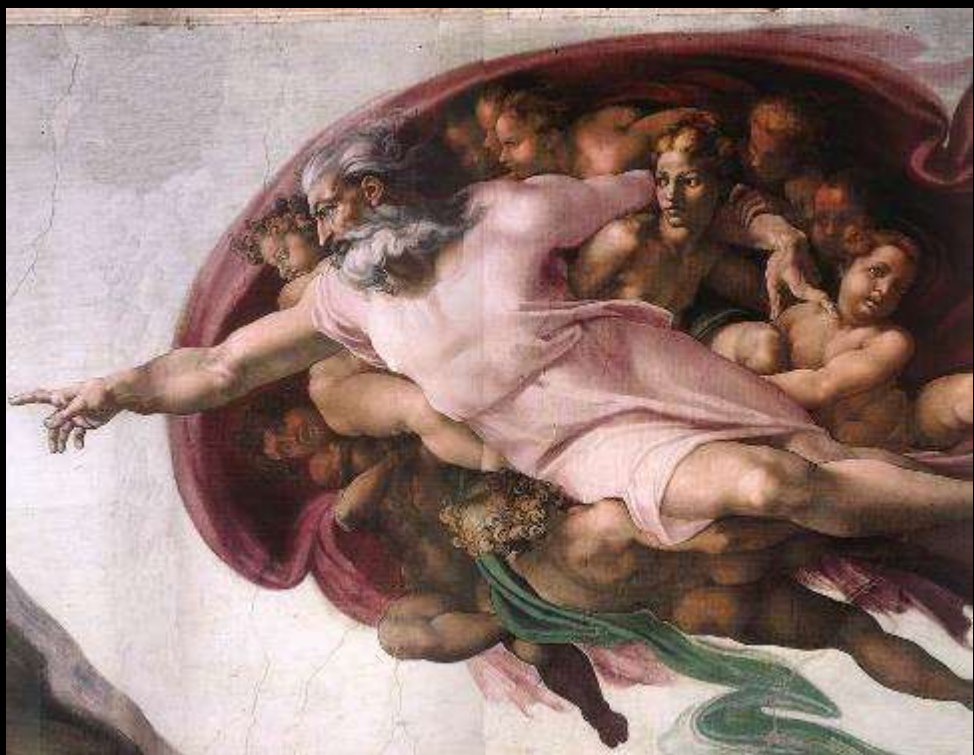
In line with duty and benefit to others

That necessitates a rigorous cross-examination and emendation of one's mind

SPINOZA'S STOICISM



2. THE GOD OF SPINOZA



‘I believe in Spinoza’s God, who reveals Himself in the lawful harmony of the world, not in a God who concerns Himself with the fate and the doings of mankind...’ – Albert Einstein

INTRODUCING THE ETHICS

Spinoza spent most of his life on *Ethics* and it reflects the fullest achievements of his thinking

Published posthumously in 1677, probably finished two years prior

Written in Latin, the *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order* lives up to its title

In five parts it addresses God, the mind, the emotions, and human freedom

ETHICA

Ordine Geometrico demonstrata,

ET

*In quinque Partes distincta,
in quibus agitur,*

- I. De DEO.
- II. De Naturâ & Origine MENTIS.
- III. De Origine & Naturâ AFFECTUUM.
- IV. De SERVITUTE Humanâ, seu de AFFECTUUM VIRIBUS.
- V. De POTENTIA INTELLECTUS, seu de LIBERTATE Humanâ.

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II/46 Exp.: I say absolutely infinite, not infinite in its own kind; for if something is only infinite in its own kind, we can deny infinite attributes of it [NS: (i.e., we can conceive infinite attributes which do not pertain to its nature)]; but if something is absolutely infinite, whatever expresses essence and involves no negation pertains to its essence.

D7: That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone. But a thing is called necessary, or rather compelled, which is determined by another to exist and to produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner.

D8: By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing.

Exp.: For such existence, like the essence of a thing, is conceived as an eternal truth, and on that account cannot be explained by duration or time, even if the duration is conceived to be without beginning or end.

AXIOMS

A1: Whatever is, is either in itself or in another.

A2: What cannot be conceived through another, must be conceived through itself.

A3: From a given determinate cause the effect follows necessarily; and conversely, if there is no determinate cause, it is impossible for an effect to follow.

A4: The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause.

A5: Things that have nothing in common with one another also cannot be understood through one another, or the concept of the one does not involve the concept of the other.

II/47 A6: A true idea must agree with its object.

A7: If a thing can be conceived as not existing, its essence does not involve existence.

P1: A substance is prior in nature to its affections.

Dem.: This is evident from D3 and D5.

P2: Two substances having different attributes have nothing in common with one another.

Dem.: This is also evident from D3. For each must be in itself and be

conceived through itself, or the concept of the one does not involve the concept of the other.

P3: If things have nothing in common with one another, one of them cannot be the cause of the other.

Dem.: If they have nothing in common with one another, then (by A5) they cannot be understood through one another, and so (by A4) one cannot be the cause of the other, q.e.d.

P4: Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another, either by a difference in the attributes of the substances or by a difference in their affections.

Dem.: Whatever is, is either in itself or in another (by A1), that is (by D3 and D5), outside the intellect there is nothing except substances and their affections. Therefore, there is nothing outside the intellect through which a number of things can be distinguished from one another except substances, or what is the same (by D4), their attributes, and their affections, q.e.d. II/48

P5: In Nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute.

Dem.: If there were two or more distinct substances, they would have to be distinguished from one another either by a difference in their attributes, or by a difference in their affections (by P4). If only by a difference in their attributes, then it will be conceded that there is only one of the same attribute. But if by a difference in their affections, then since a substance is prior in nature to its affections (by P1), if the affections are put to one side and [the substance] is considered in itself, that is (by D3 and A6), considered truly, one cannot be conceived to be distinguished from another, that is (by P4), there cannot be many, but only one [of the same nature or attribute], q.e.d.

P6: One substance cannot be produced by another substance.

Dem.: In Nature there cannot be two substances of the same attribute (by P5), that is (by P2), which have something in common with each other. Therefore (by P3) one cannot be the cause of the other, or cannot be produced by the other, q.e.d.

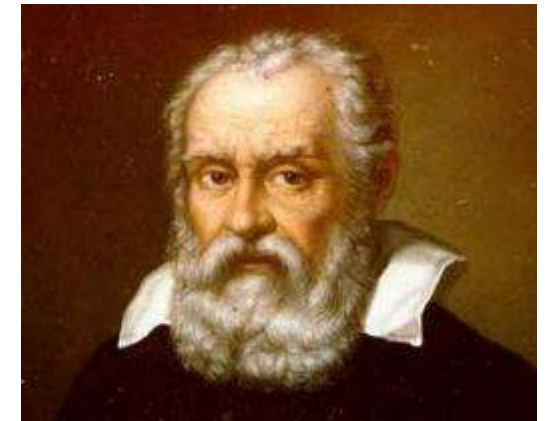
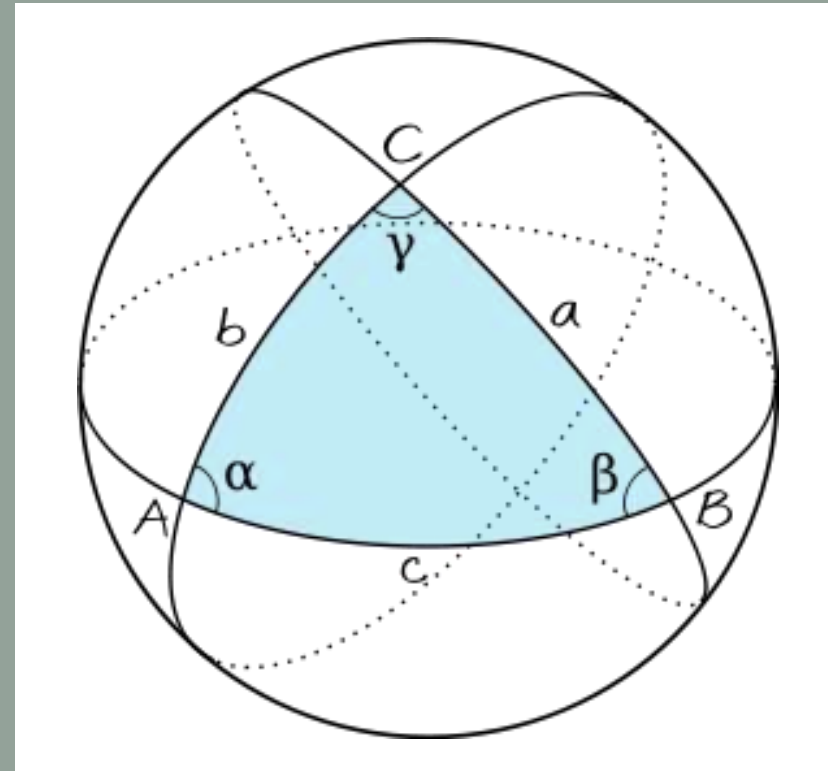
Cor.: From this it follows that a substance cannot be produced by anything else. For in Nature there is nothing except substances and their affections, as is evident from A1, D3, and D5. But it cannot be produced by a substance (by P6). Therefore, substance absolutely cannot be produced by anything else, q.e.d.

Alternatively: This is demonstrated even more easily from the absurdity of its contradictory. For if a substance could be produced by

GEOMETRIC METHOD

‘I shall consider human actions and appetites as if it were a question of lines, planes and bodies’. (E 3 Preface)

‘The universe is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures’. (Galileo, *The Assayer*)

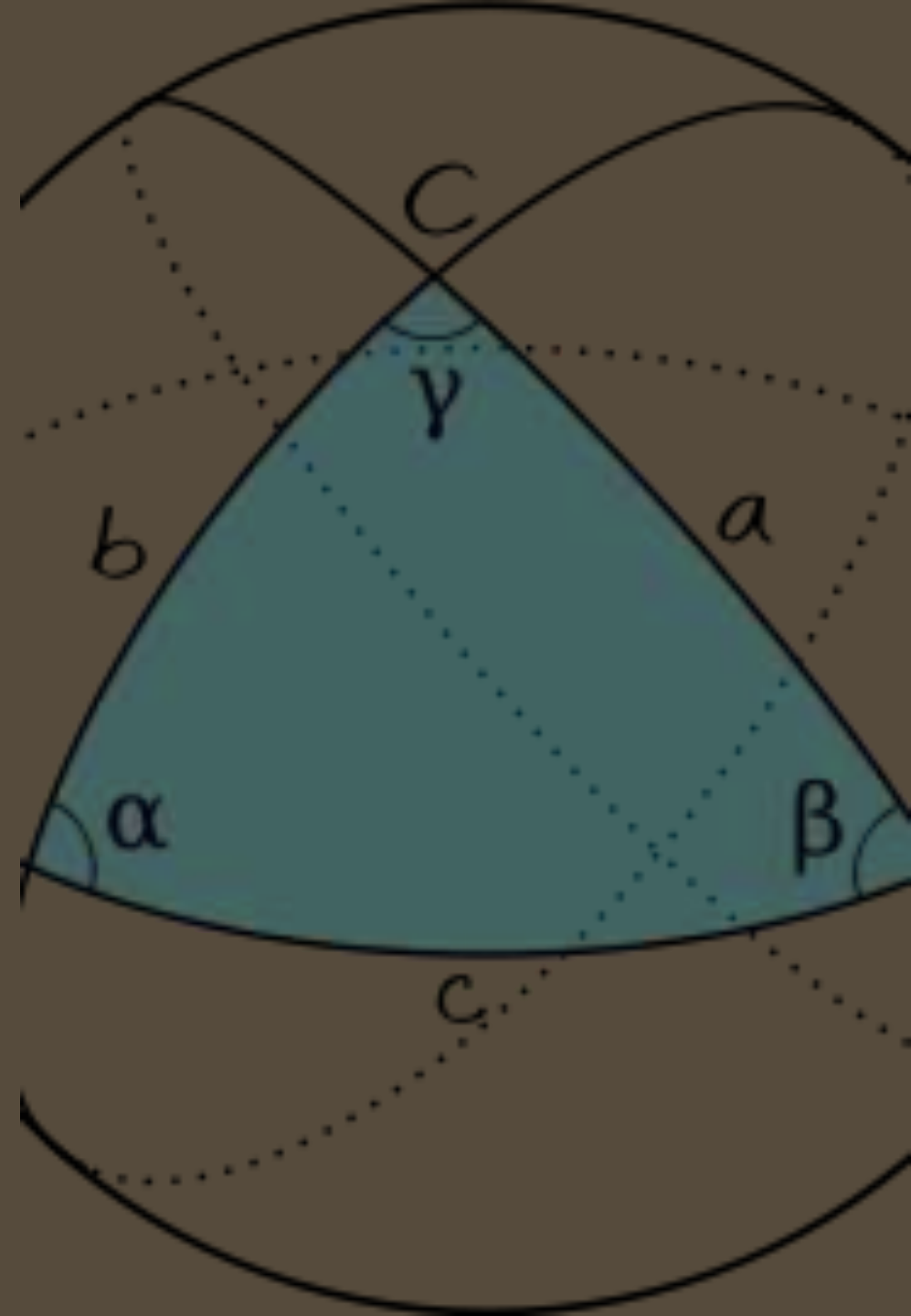


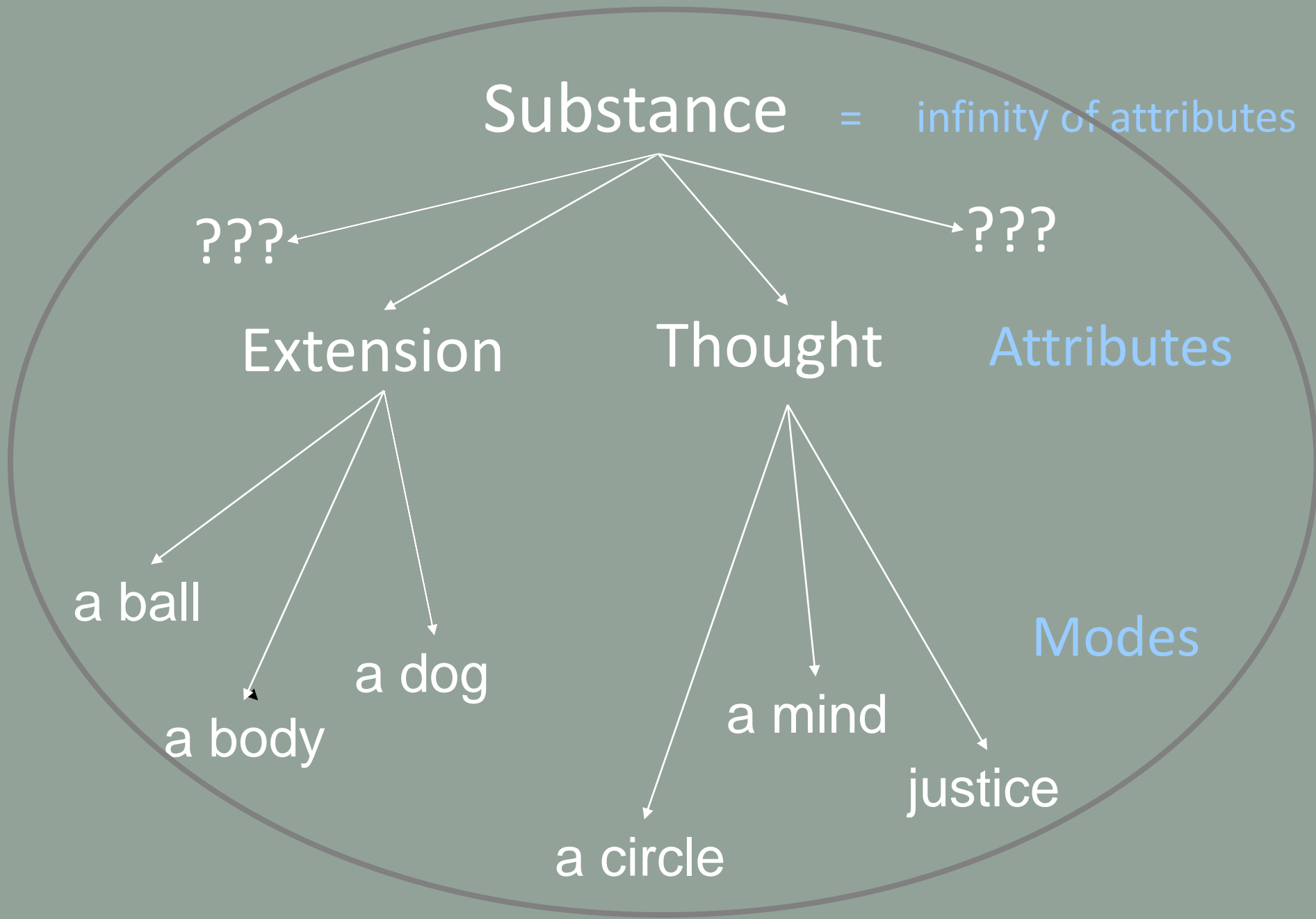
GEOMETRIC METHOD

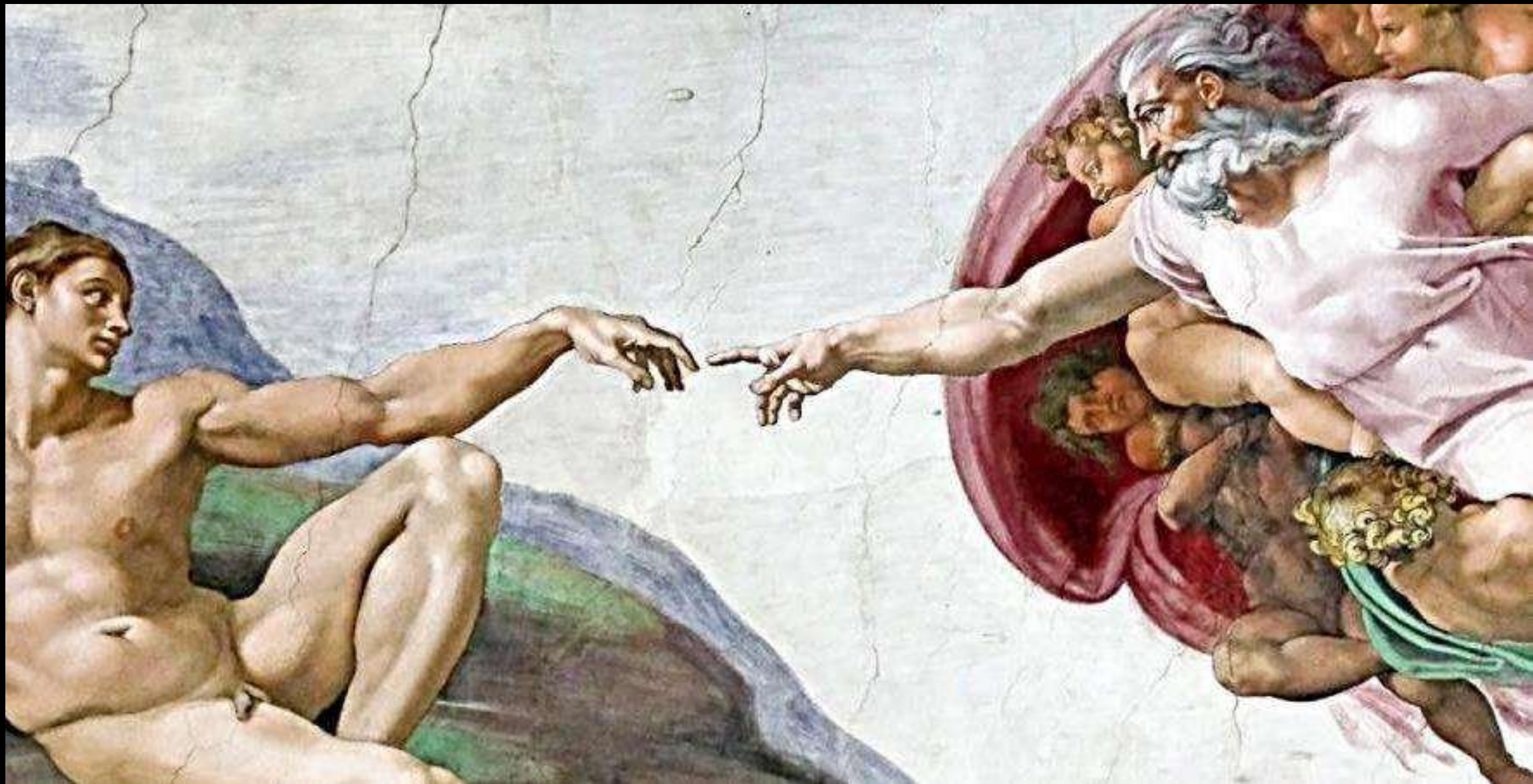
‘in order to enquire into matters relevant to this branch of knowledge in the same unfettered spirit as is habitually shown in mathematical studies, I have taken great care not to mock, lament, or curse human actions, but to understand them.

So I have regarded human emotions such as love, hatred, anger, envy, pride, pity, and other agitations in the same way as heat, cold, storm, thunder, and such pertain to the atmosphere.’

- (*Political Treatise*, 1.4)





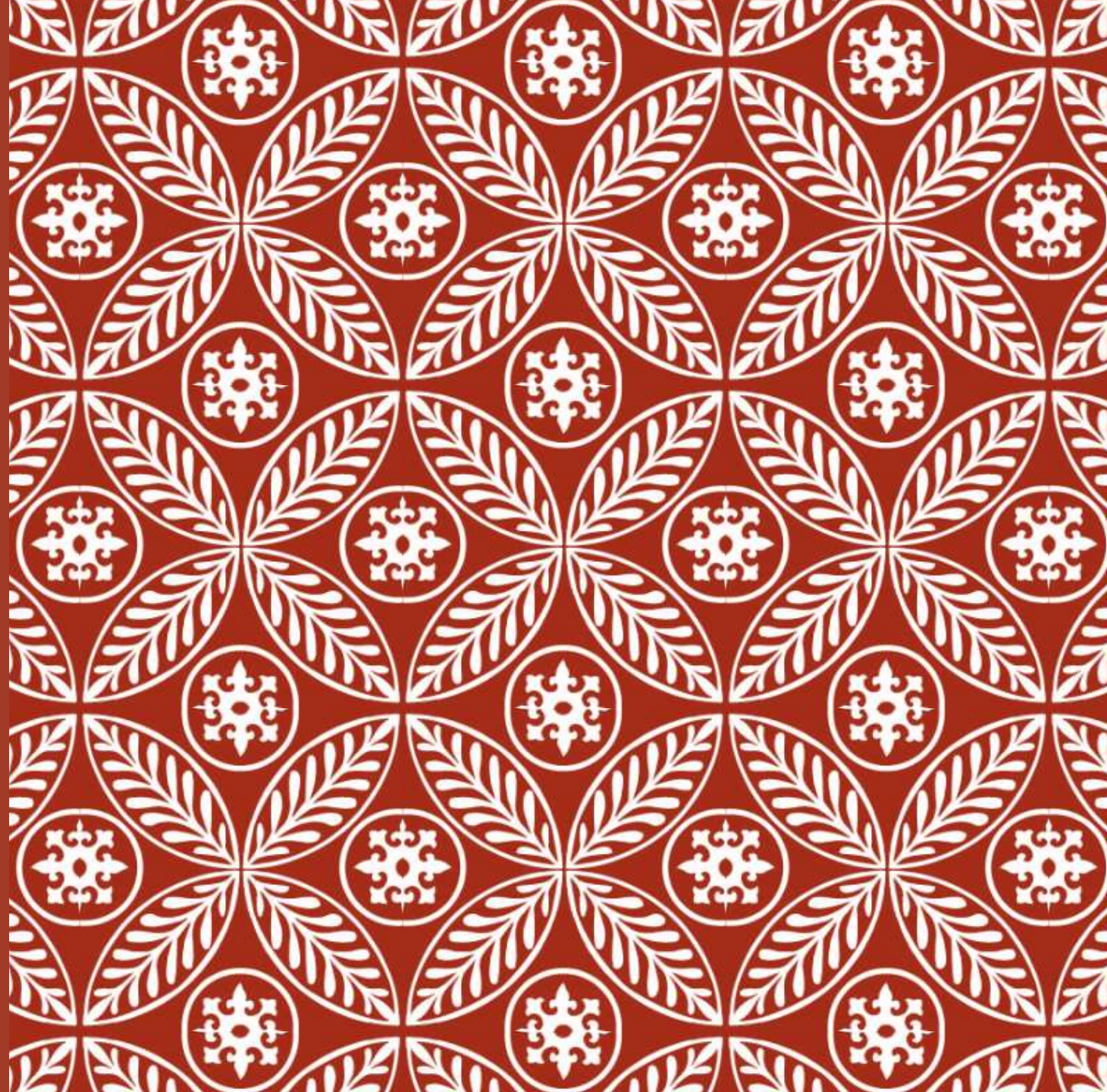


SUBSTANCE MONISM

- That which is in itself and conceived through itself (Id3)
- It is singular (P5-6, P14)
- It necessarily exists (P7, P11)
- It consists of an infinity of attributes, each expressing essence (Id6, P11)
- It is God, an absolutely infinite being (Id6)
- Infinite and indivisible, perfect (P13-P14)
- God is an efficient, immanent, first cause (P16)



3. DESIRE







THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE

The kind of freedom which human beings often value, free will, is often based on an ignorance of what causes it

If most of what we believe about the world is often inadequate, how do we find a sure footing for determining how we should live?

For Spinoza, we need to explore what human beings truly are – beings of nature, driven by emotions and desire



One thing defines all things in nature...

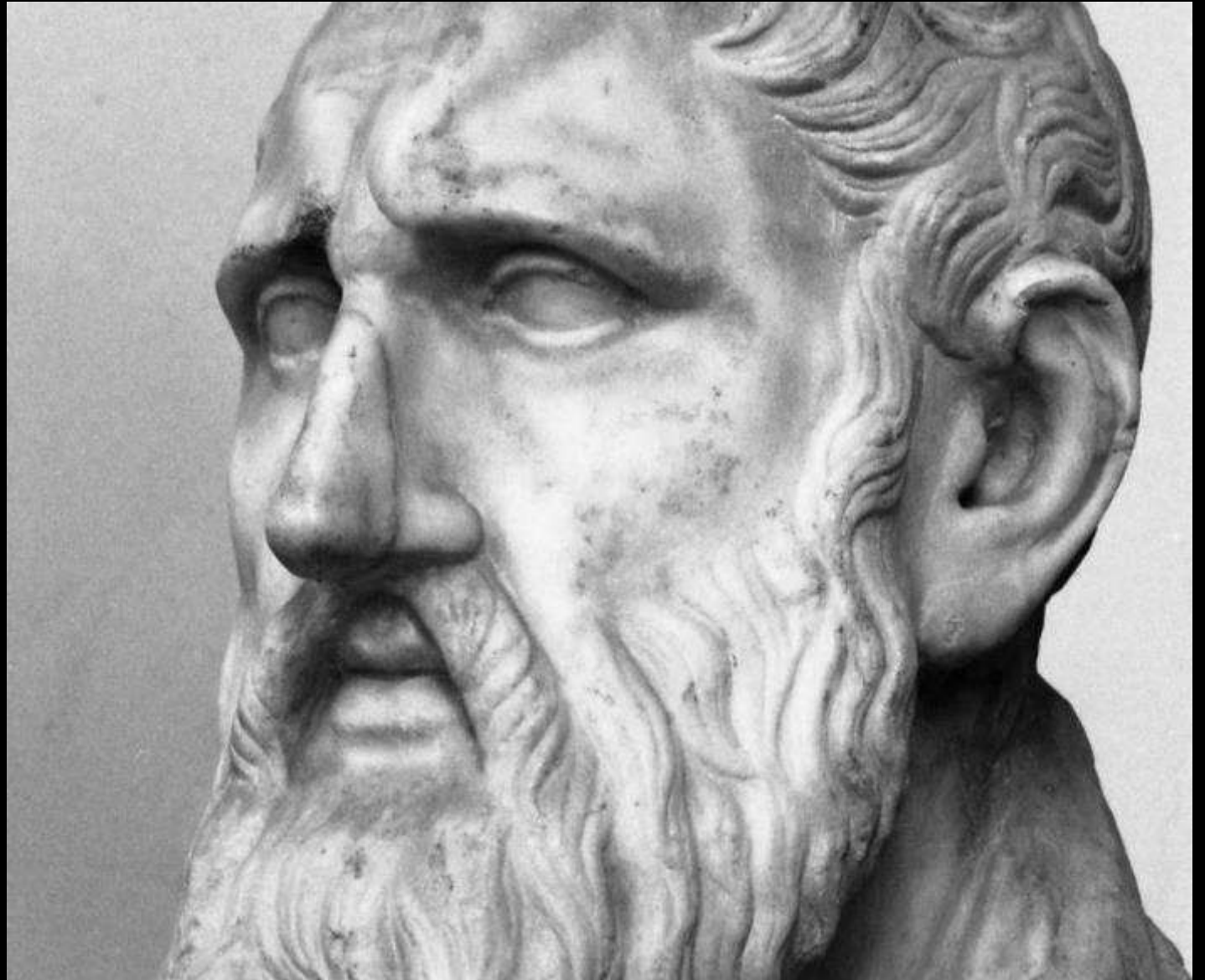
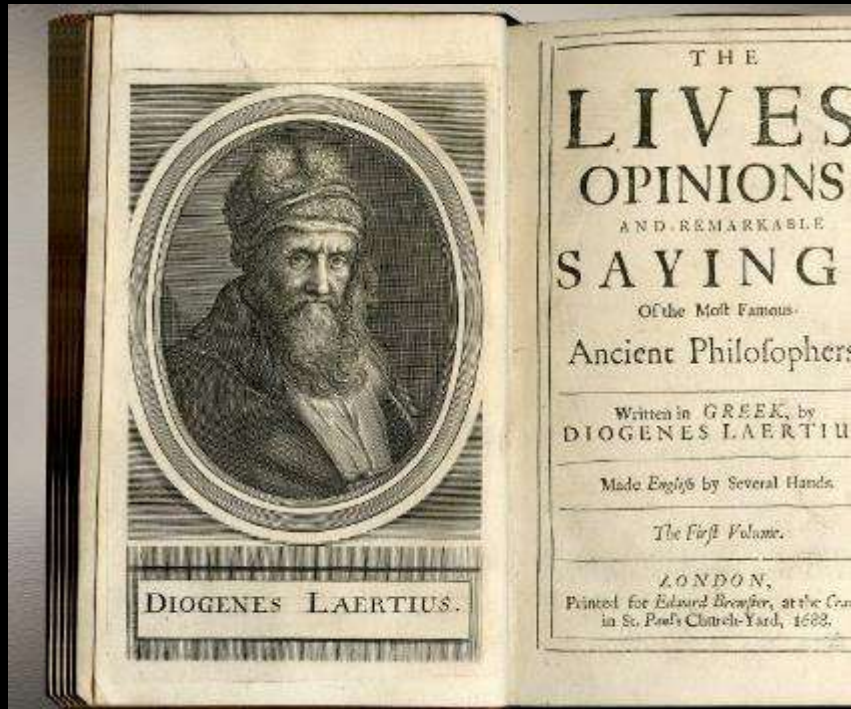
A *conatus*, that is, a fundamental striving to persist in its own being

Each thing is defined by this striving to remain alive – it is its essence, and is animated by it, independent of time or any other existing thing

Spinoza's account of the *conatus*, a rule of self-preservation, is made in E3p4-p9...

'Each thing, insofar as it is in itself, strives [*conatur*] to persist in its own being' (E3p6)

THE CONATUS





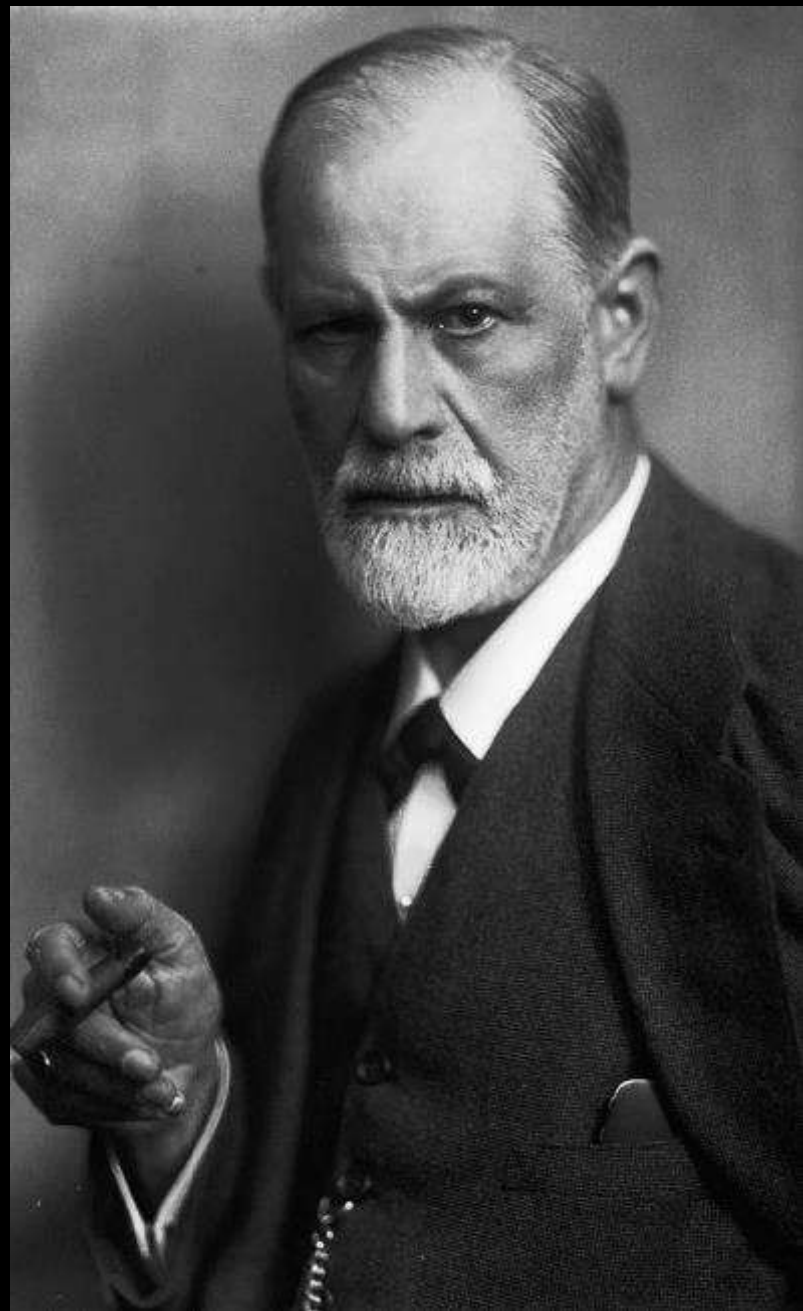
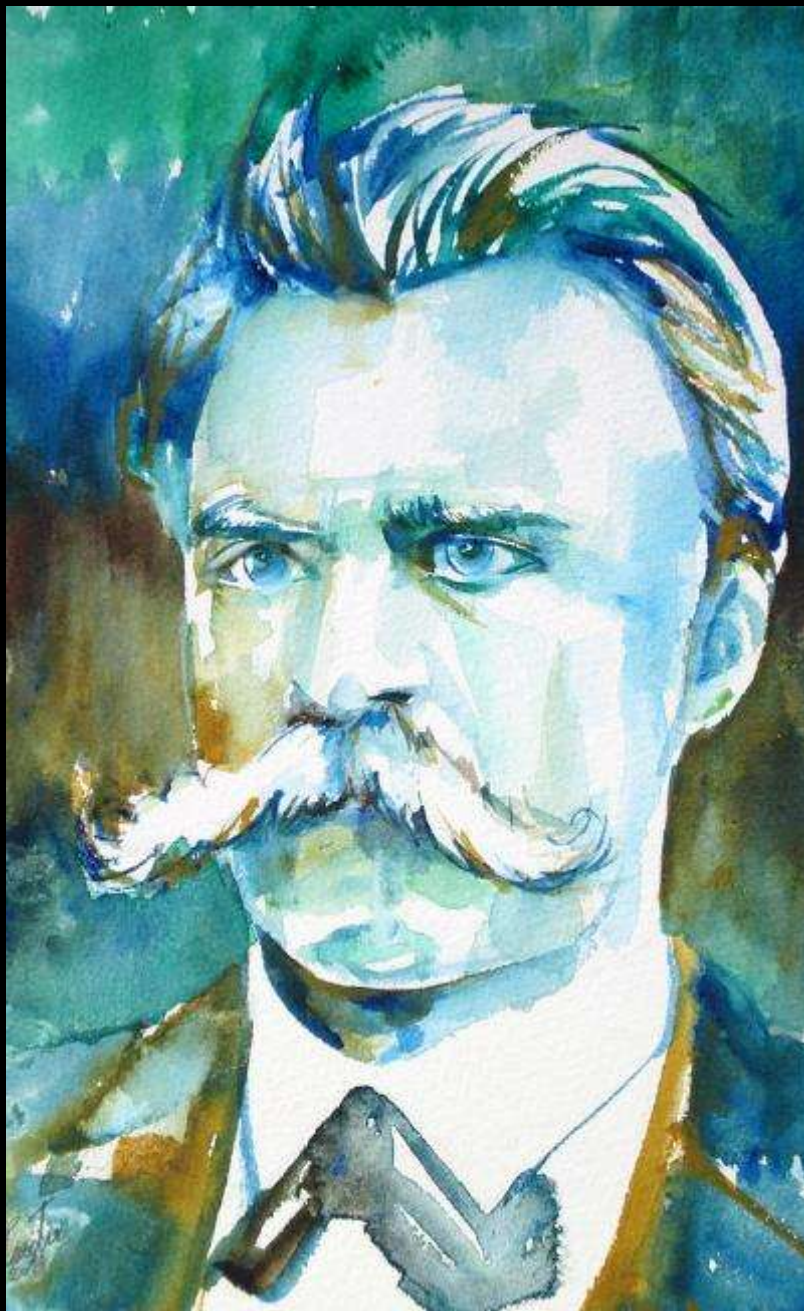
‘It is clear from the above considerations that we do not strive, will, seek after or desire because we judge a thing to be good. On the contrary, we judge a thing to be good because we strive, will, seek after and desire it.’

DESIRE





Bosch, "Gluttony", From *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1500)



THE AFFECTS

Spinoza's psychology hinges on the emotions, which are often translated as the 'affects' to capture their inherently dynamic influence

Of all the different emotions we can feel, Spinoza follows Descartes in distinguishing them into three kinds

Emotion, from the Latin *emovere*, to 'move out', an agitation or internal movement outward

Affect, a disposition, mood, state of mind or body produced by some external influence



Love: 'joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause' (3p13s)

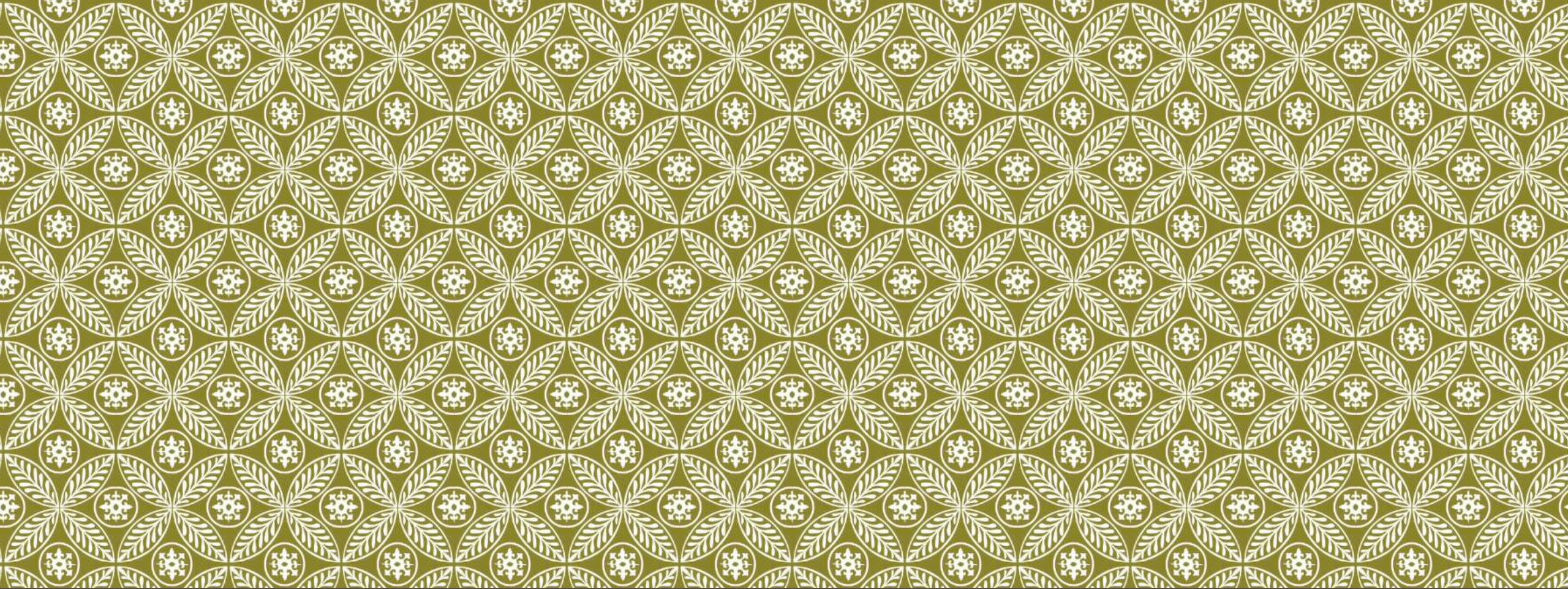
Hate: 'sadness accompanied by the idea of an external cause'

She or he who loves strives 'to have present and preserve the thing they love'

Indeed, even thinking of the thing loved will make a person feel more alive and powerful

What we imagine will bring it happiness will bring us joy, and vice-versa

LOVE...



4. SERVITUDE



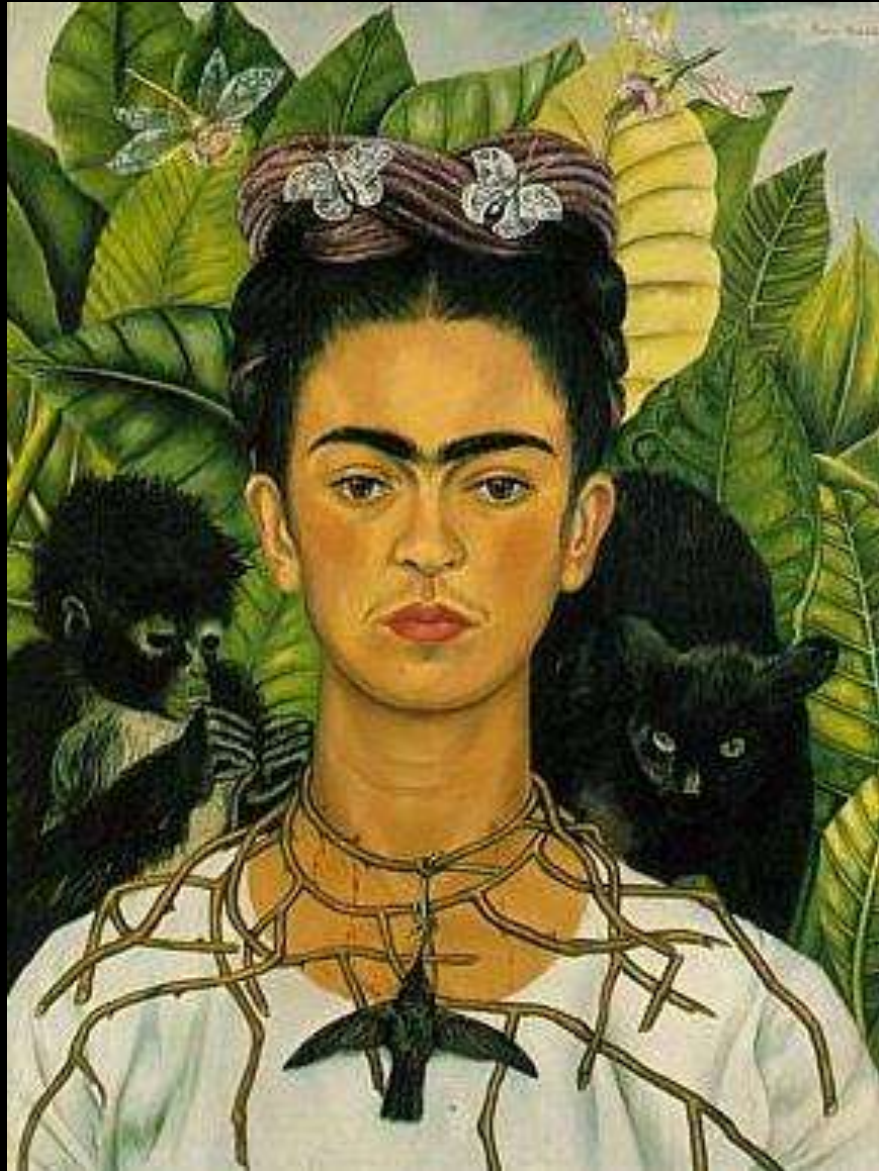
‘the object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body’

‘the object of our mind is the existing body and nothing else’

‘man consists of a mind and a body’ (2p13)

‘no one knows what a body can do’ (3p2)

WHAT IS A HUMAN BEING?





WHAT MAKES A HUMAN BEING?

A mind and a body

A conatus...

i.e. a striving to persevere in being

Maintaining an internal proportion or ratio conducive to life within ourselves

A continual series of interactions and encounters with the world...

Which we experience in our bodies as affections, and which produce in our mind ideas or affects

‘Man’s lack of power to moderate and restrain the affects I call *servitude*.

For the man who is subject to affects is under the control, not of himself, but of fortune, in whose power he so greatly is that often, though he sees the better for himself, he is still forced to follow the worse.’ (4 pref)

THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE

AN ETHICS OF CAPACITY

‘we call good, or evil,
what is useful to, or
harmful to, preserving
our being

... i.e. what increases
or diminishes, aids or
restrains, our power
of acting.’ (4 p8, df.
1-2)



HOW DO WE FEEL?

Affects and images that are present or close to us feel stronger than those at a distant

Things that are thought of as inevitable, 'natural' or necessary are more strongly felt than those contingent or possible

The power of an emotion e.g. hate, isn't usually countered by reason alone, but by another stronger emotion (p14), e.g. fear







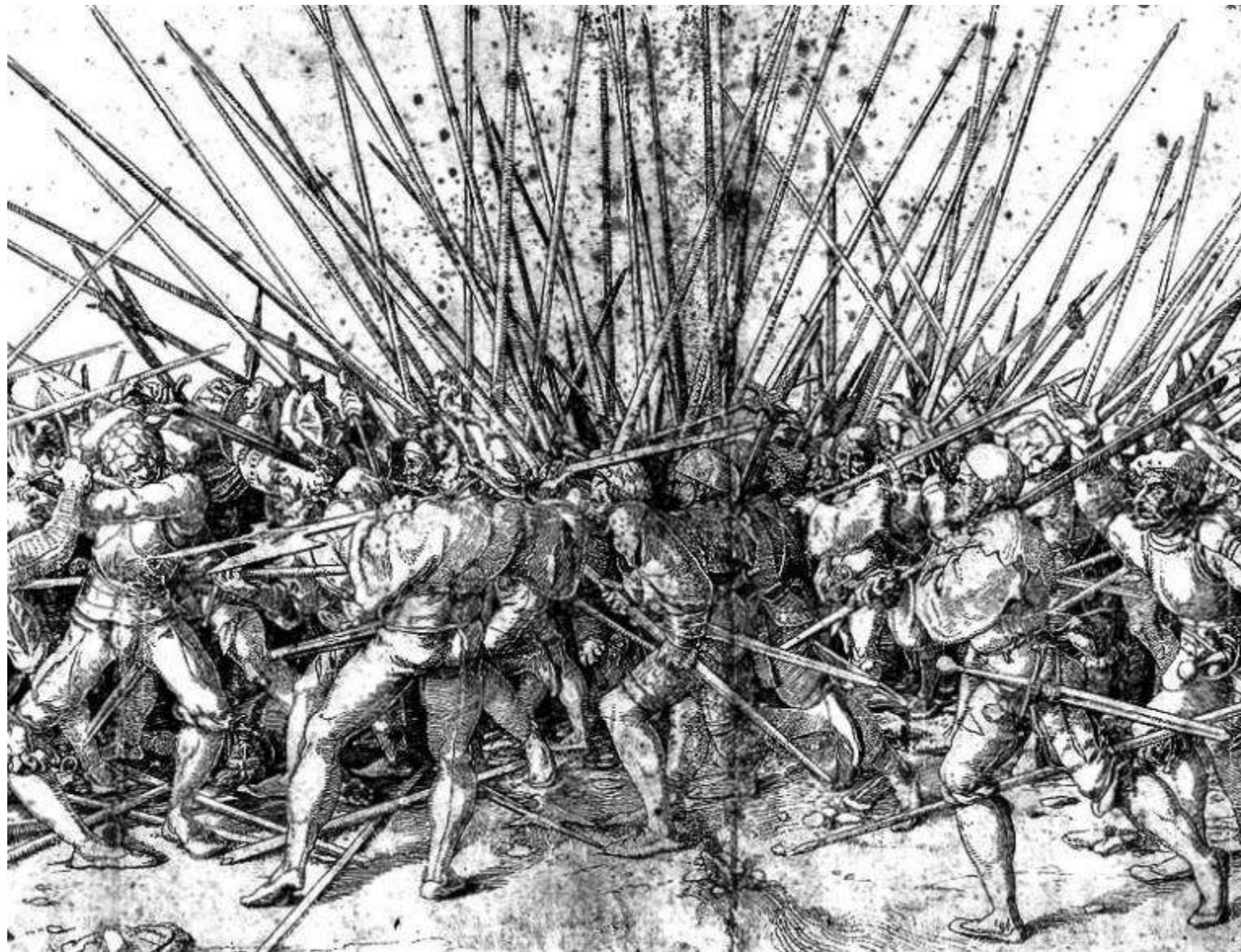
‘A man kills himself when he is compelled by another who twists the hand in which he happens to hold a sword and makes him turn the blade against his heart; or when, in obedience to a tyrant's command, he, like Seneca, is compelled to open his veins, that is, he chooses a lesser evil to avoid a greater.’ (4p20s)

‘the mind ... has certainty of things only insofar as it has adequate ideas, or ... insofar as it reasons’
(4p27s)

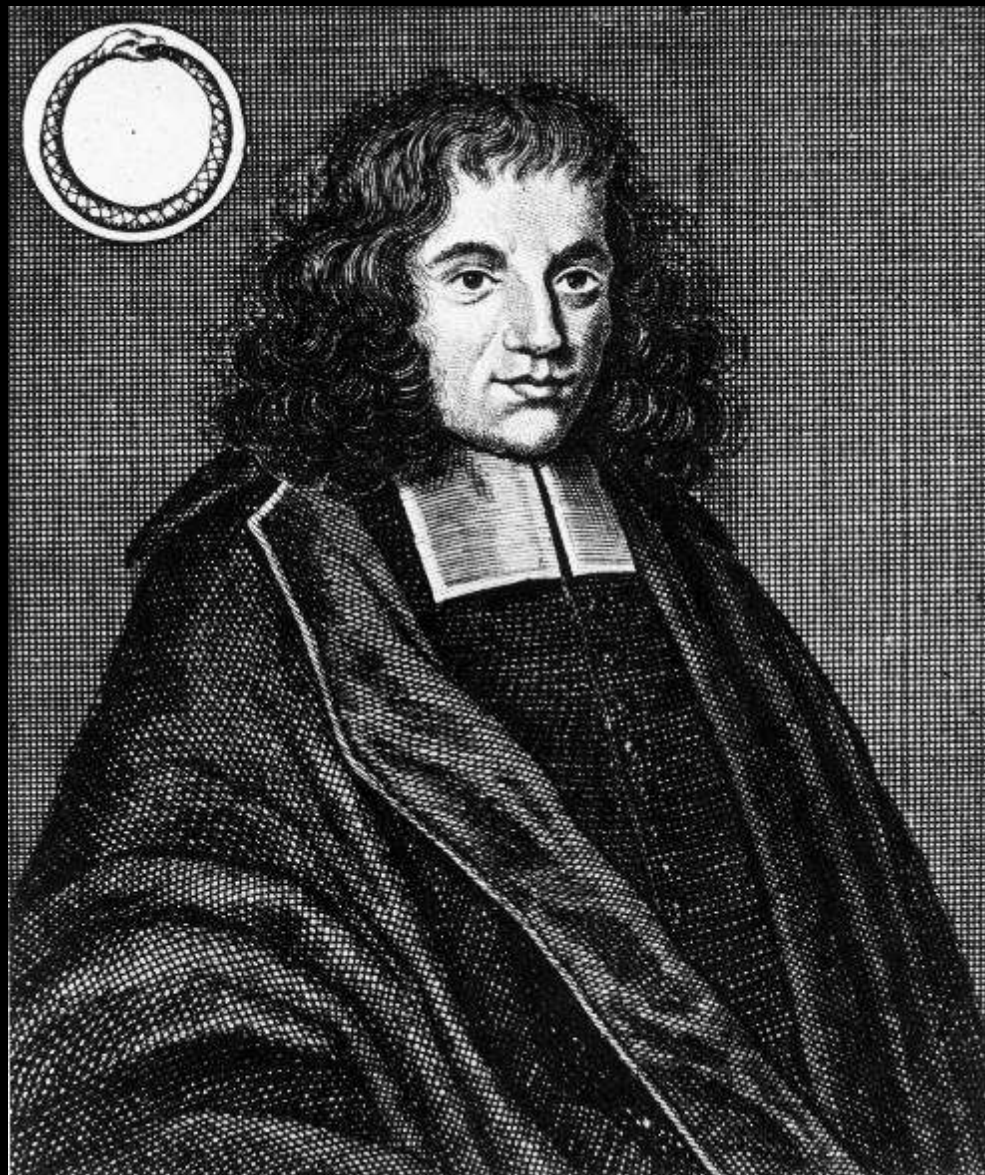
‘Knowledge of God is the Mind’s greatest good; its greatest virtue is to know God’ (4p28)

‘nothing can be good except insofar as it agrees with our nature. So the more a thing agrees with our nature, the more useful it is to us, and vice versa.’
(4p31c)

THE GUIDANCE OF REASON

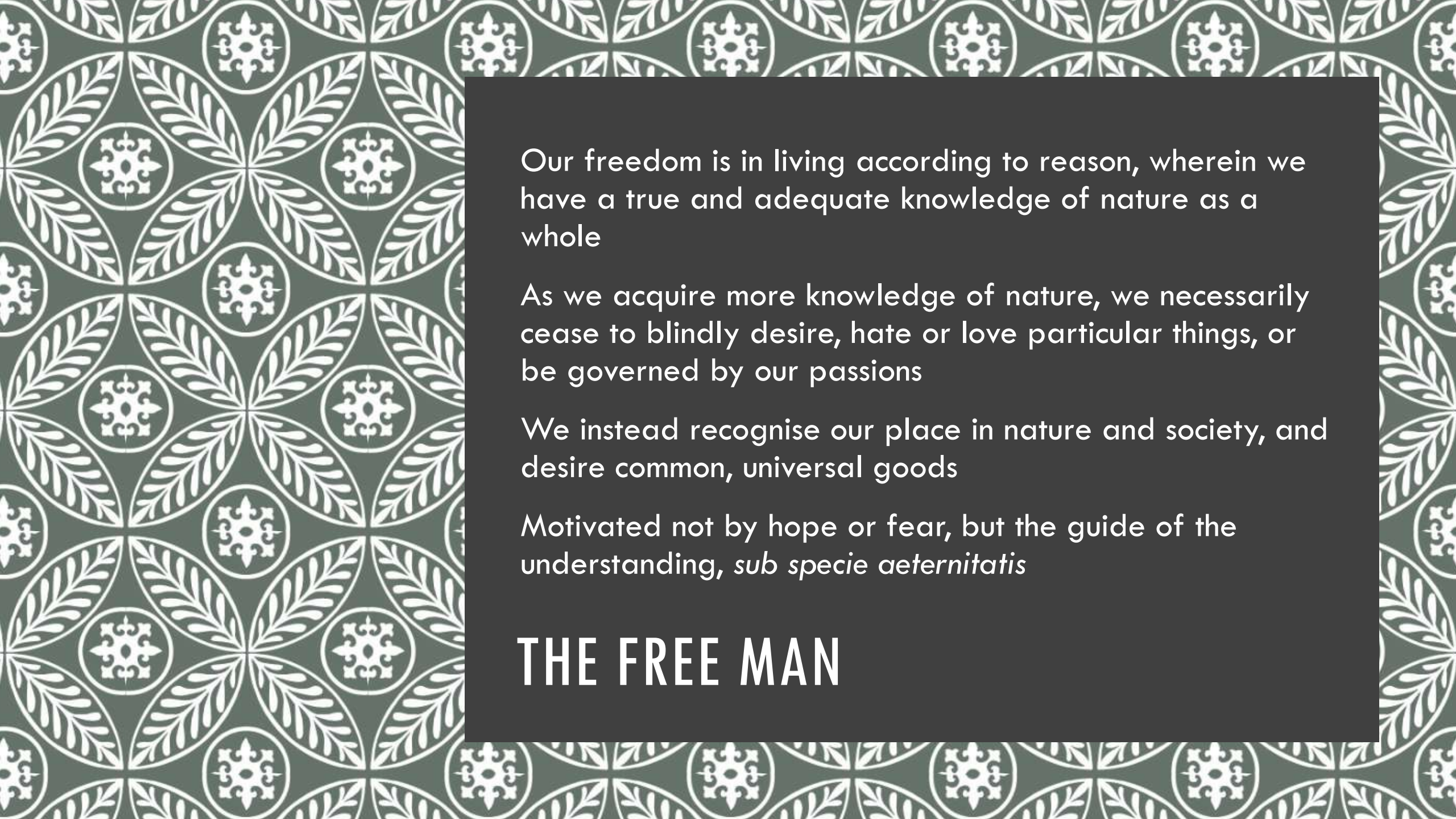


5. BLESSEDNESS





‘The free man thinks of nothing less than death, and his wisdom is a meditation on life, not on death’ (4p67)



Our freedom is in living according to reason, wherein we have a true and adequate knowledge of nature as a whole

As we acquire more knowledge of nature, we necessarily cease to blindly desire, hate or love particular things, or be governed by our passions

We instead recognise our place in nature and society, and desire common, universal goods

Motivated not by hope or fear, but the guide of the understanding, *sub specie aeternitatis*

THE FREE MAN

SPINOZA *and the* STOICS

JON MILLER

Firmin DeBrabander

Spinoza and the Stoics



CONTINUUM STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY

SPINOZA THE STOIC?

God is within a unified Nature

Human beings are just parts of a wider whole of Nature

Determinism without fatalism

Eliminating painful emotions and living in accordance with Reason



SPINOZA THE STOIC?

But: rejects providence and living without passions

‘The Stoics thought that [the passions] depend entirely on our will, and that we can command them absolutely. But experience cries out against this, and has forced them, in spite of their principles, to confess that much practice and application are required to restrain and moderate them.’

Seen as a “new Stoic” by critics inc. Leibniz – the Greek Stoics became pre-Spinozists...



FOR DISCUSSION ON MONDAY

1. What characterises Spinoza's style and approach?
2. What is the significance of the affects to ethical life?
3. Should Spinoza be considered a Stoic?

Discussion: 1pm-3pm. You can use the same Zoom link from last week. It's also up on Moodle

WEEK 10: CAMUS

By request – a week exploring the challenges facing Stoic thinking

We turn to *The Myth of Sisyphus*, an exploration of how the universe and nature are not intelligible to human reason

Camus's project, and wider absurdism, derail the Stoic project

But, does Camus come closer than we might think to the necessity of thinking and living well in a deterministic universe?