

Belgian world famous scientists

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ESAT-SCD, Electrical Engineering

Vice-rector International Policy

Contents

Humanities ('Artes')

Medicine

Science and engineering

Some modern names

Erasmus (Geert Geerts) (Rotterdam 1466-67-69 - Bazel 1536)

- Studied at many schools in the Netherlands
- Priest
- Studied in Paris, London
- Got to know Henry VIII, Thomas More
- Offered professorship in Leuven by Adrianus
- founded Collegium Trilingue
- wrote *Laus Stultitiae* (still very popular)
- Advisor to Emperor Charles V (cfr. Wikileaks)
- Sympathetic to Luther (1517) but also critic (no freedom)
- Humanism, tolerance, general culture and civilisation,
common sense, no dogma's
- Collected works: culture, ethics, religion (translation of Greek bible)
- 11th in most famous Belgian ranking
- In 2016: Utopia exhibition @ Leuven (M) (large collection
of letters of Erasmus & More)



Rembert Dodoens (Mechelen 1517 – Leiden 1585)

- Physician and botanist
- Studied in Leuven (collegium Trilingue)
- Courses from Gemma Frisius
- Physician of the Emperor Maximiliaan II, Vienna
- Professor @ Leiden
- Cruydt-boek
- [Carolus Linnaeus](#)

Genus [Dodonaea](#) and species

[Epilobium dodonaei](#),

[Ilex dodonaea](#),

[Comocladia dodonaea](#),

[Phellandrium dodonaei](#),

[Smyrnum dodonaei](#),

[Hypericum dodonaei](#)

[Pelargonium dodonaei](#).



Andreas Vesalius

(Andries van Wesel Brussels 1514 – Zakynthos 1564)

- Physician and anatomical pioneer
- [*De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*](#)
(*Seven books over the human body*)
- Student in Leuven and Paris
- Counteracted Galenus teachings from 2nd century
by propagating the importance of observations
(cfr. Leonardo da Vinci)
- Disagreed with some professors in Leuven and left for Padua to become professor
- Vivisection on bodies of hanged criminals and living animals
- Subject to many critics, left academia
- Became personal physician to Emperor Charles V and Filips II
- Died when returning from pilgrimage (after dead of a patient ?)
- 6th in most famous Belgian ranking



Andreas Vesalius



De humani corporis fabrica libri septem

Mercator

Gerard Kremer (Rupelmonde 1512 – Duisburg 1594)

- born 20 years after Columbus
- Cartographer, geographer, instrument builder
- studied in Leuven
- Started with maps of Holy Land, Flanders
- Coined the word 'atlas'
- Invented the 'Mercator projection' :
(preserve surface, form, angles, distance)
to be useful @ sea: compass so angle preservation
- Chronology: history of the world
(Big history)
- 8th in most famous Belgian ranking



Henri Pirenne (Verviers 1862 – Ukkel 1935)

- Professor Medieval History @ University Gent
- Histoire de Belgique, 7 parts (no longer reference)
- Mohamed and Charlemagne (no longer reference)
- Prisoner of War in First World War
- Nr. 106 in most famous Belgian ranking



Adolphe Sax (Dinant, 1814-1894)

- Builder of musical instruments
- Saxophone
- First time played behind curtain because of patent pending
- Instrument production plant "Adolphe Sax & Cie"
- Nr. 12 in most famous Belgian competition



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Jules Bordet (Zinnik 1870, Brussels 1961)

- Immunologist & microbiologist
- Nobel prize medicine 1919
- [immunoglobuline *in vivo*](#) significant wordt versterkt door lichaamseigen plasma-elementen
- A lot of honorary degrees
- Basis of many diagnostic tests
- Discovered Bacteria Bortadella pertussis (kinkhoest)
- Founder of Institut Pasteur in Brussels



Corneille Heymans (Gent 1892 – Knokke 1968)

- Professor Gent , Medicine and Farmacology
- Nobelprize Medicine: Blood pressure and oxygen feedback by chemoreceptors towards brains and heart
- Many dr. h.c. ; ‘world traveler’ for WHO



Pieter de Somer (Niel 1917 – Leuven 1985)



- Physician , microbiology, immunology
- Professor @ K.U.Leuven
- Penicilline: Industrial Production
- [Recherche et Industrie Thérapeutiques](#) (R.I.T.)
- [GlaxoSmithKline](#): Largest producer of human vaccins
- Founded Rega Institute
- First layman rector of K.U.Leuven 1968 – 1985
- Split the university
- Built Campus Gasthuisberg, Campus Heverlee, Campus Kortrijk
- Speeches
 - Against nuclear missiles
 - To the pope: The right for absolute scientific freedom

Christian de Duve (Surrey 1917 -)

- Professor @ UCL & Rockefeller Institute
- Worked on 'insuline'
- Nobel prize 1974: organelles in biological cells (lysosoom, peroxysoom)
- Dr. H.C. @ many universities
- Author of 3 very readable books



Paul Janssen (Turnhout 1926 – Rome 2003)

- Medicine and pharmacology
- Founded Janssen Pharmaceuticals 1953 now 4500 employees
- Joint Venture in Xian (first company)
- → Johnson & Johnson since 1961
- 22 dr. h.c.
- Developed himself more than 80 drugs/medicines
- 5 of his are on the list of WHO as 'indispensable'
- nr. 2 in most famous Belgian ranking



Marc Van Montagu (Gent 1933 -)

- Molecular biology
- Discovered gen transfer mechanism between *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* and plants
- = foundation of plant genetic modification
- Founded Plant Genetic Systems in 1982
- Scientific Director of VIB till his retirement
- Candidate Nobel prize !!



Desire Collen (Sint-Truiden 1943 -)

- Medicine, Chemistry and biotechnology
- Trombolysis, hemostase
- Discovered role of molecule [Tissue plasminogen activator](#) (tPA)
- Patented, licensed to Genentech; 150 mio usd royalties
- Most cited scientist in Flanders
- Scientific Director VIB until retirement
- Founded new, succesful company Thrombogenics



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Simon Stevin (Bruges 1548 – Leiden 1620)

- Physics, mathematics, engineering
- Decimal number system
- Engineering: hydrology, geography
- Invented the 'sailing car'
- Words like 'wiskunde', 'wijsbegeerte'
- Wisconstighe Ghedaechtenissen*
- Main advisor of Prins Maurits (Holland)
- Went away to escape from Inquisition (Duke of Alva)

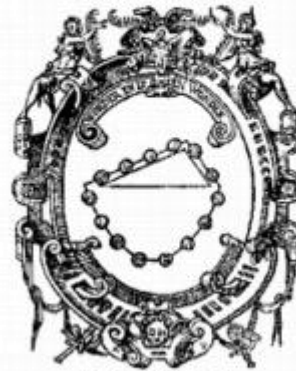
Simon Stevin



Wonder en is gheen wonder



DE
BEGHINSELEN
DER WEEGHCONST
BESCHREVEN DVER
SIMON STEVIN
van Brugghe.



TOT LEYDEN,
Inde Druckerij van Christoffel Plantijn,
By François van Raphelinghen.
c1d. Id. LXXXVI.

THIENDE. 13
HET ANDER DEEL
DER THIENDE VANDE
WERCKINGHE.
I. VOORSTEL VANDE
VERGADERINGHE.

Wesende ghegeven Thiensdetalen te vergaderen: hare Somme te vinden.

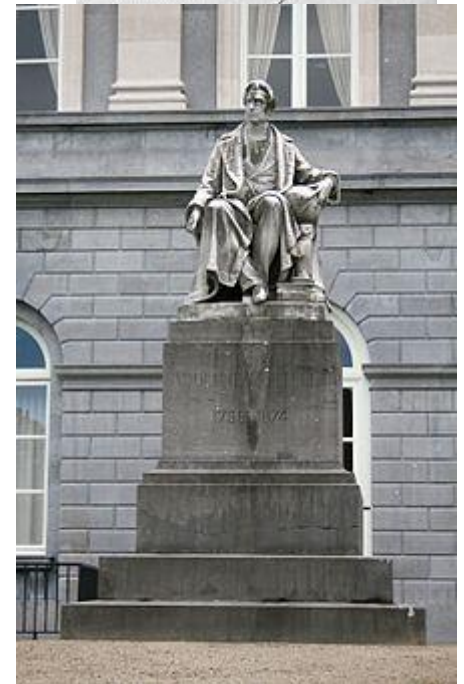
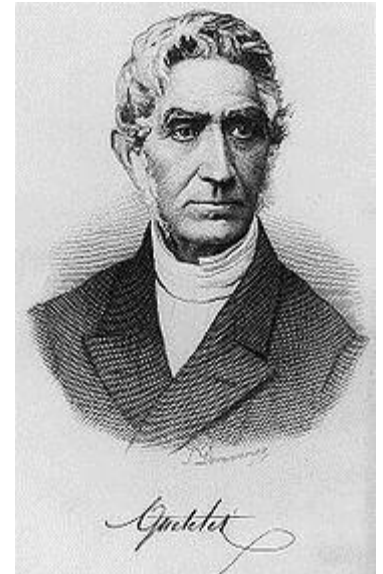
THEGHEGEVEN. Het sijn drie oirdens van Thiensdetalen, welker eerste 17 ② 8 ① 4 ③ 7 ④, de tweede, 37 ② 6 ① 7 ③ 5 ④, de derde, 875 ② 7 ① 8 ③ 1 ④, TBEGHEERDE. Wy moecten haer Somme vinden. WERCKING.

Men sal de ghegeven ghetalen in oirden stellen als hier neven, die vergaderende naer de ghemene maniere der vergaderinghe van hcelegetalen aldus:	② ① ③ ④
	2 7 8 4 7
	3 7 6 7 5
	8 7 5 7 8 1
	9 4 1 3 0 4

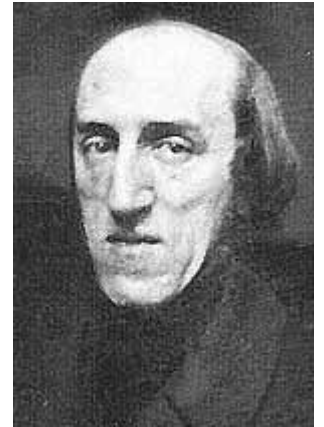
Comt in Somme (door het 1. probleme onser Franscher Arith.) 9 4 1 3 0 4 dat sijn (twelck de teeckenen boven de ghetalen staende, anwijfen) 9 4 1 ③ ① ② ④ ③. Ick segghe de selve te wesen de ware begheerde Somme. B 1 w v s. De ghegeven 17 ② 8 ① 4 ③ 7 ④, doen (door de 3. bepaling) 17 ② ① ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮ ⑯ ⑰ ⑱ ⑲ ⑳ ㉑ ㉒ ㉓ ㉔ ㉕ ㉖ ㉗ ㉘ ㉙ ㉚ ㉛ ㉜ ㉝ ㉞ ㉟ ㊱ ㊲ ㊳ ㊴ ㊵ ㊶ ㊷ ㊸ ㊹ ㊺ ㊻ ㊼ ㊽ ㊾ ㊿ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100. Ende door de selve reden sullen de 37 ② 6 ① 7 ③ 5 ④, weerdich sijn 37 ② ① ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮ ⑯ ⑰ ⑱ ⑲ ⑳ ㉑ ㉒ ㉓ ㉔ ㉕ ㉖ ㉗ ㉘ ㉙ ㉚ ㉛ ㉜ ㉝ ㉞ ㉟ ㊱ ㊲ ㊳ ㊴ ㊵ ㊶ ㊷ ㊸ ㊹ ㊺ ㊻ ㊼ ㊽ ㊾ ㊿ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100. Ende de 875 ② 7 ① 8 ③ 1 ④, weerdich sijn 875 ② ① ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮ ⑯ ⑰ ⑱ ⑲ ⑳ ㉑ ㉒ ㉓ ㉔ ㉕ ㉖ ㉗ ㉘ ㉙ ㉚ ㉛ ㉜ ㉝ ㉞ ㉟ ㊱ ㊲ ㊳ ㊴ ㊵ ㊶ ㊷ ㊸ ㊹ ㊺ ㊻ ㊼ ㊽ ㊾ ㊿ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100.

Adolphe Quetelet (Gent 1796 – Brussels 1874)

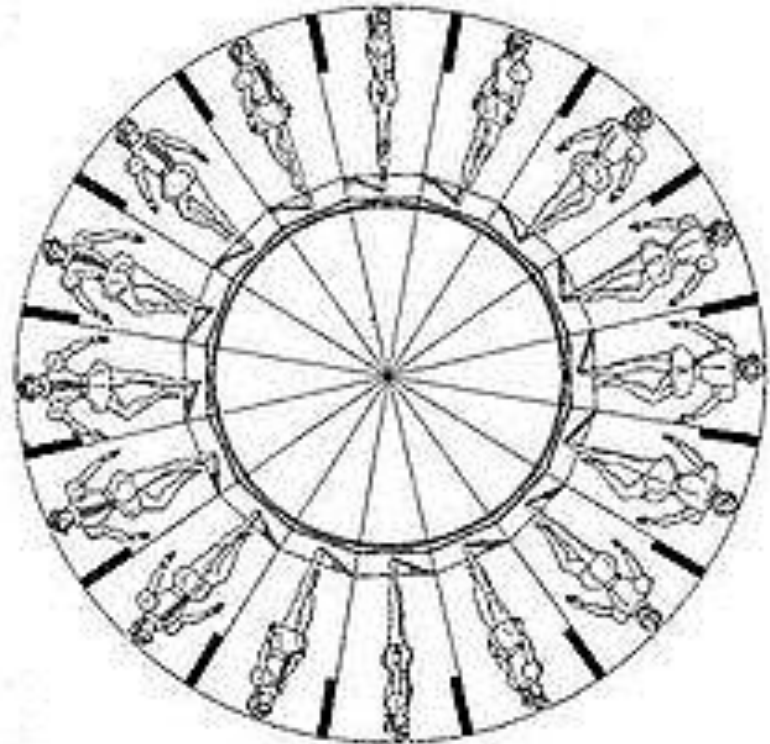
- Astronomer, mathematician, statistician, sociologist
- Build the Royal astronomical institute in Brussels
- pioneer in meteorite research
- origin of statistics (Gauss) lies in astronomy
- introduced statistics in sociology (criminality, population,...)
l'homme moyen
- inventor of the Body Mass Index or BMI (= Queteletindex)
- co-founder of ULB
- 40 year secretary *l'Académie royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*
- nr. 86 in most famous Belgian ranking



Joseph Plateau (Brussels 1801 – Gent 1883)



- Physicist and mathematician
- Studied in Liege; Professor physics in Gent
- Discovered vision delay in the eye: visual imprint of an image after seeing it (stare in a light source)
- Origin of fenakistiscope → cinematograph → movie industry
- Surface tension problem = Plateau problem
- became blind from staring in the sun
- 164th in most famous Belgian ranking



Charles-Jean de la Vallée Poussin (Leuven 1866 – Brussels 1962)

- trained as engineer
- research as Mathematician
- worked with Camille Jordan & Henri Poincare
- & Hermann Schwarz & Henri Lebesgue
- Prime number theorem 1896

describes the [asymptotic](#) distribution of the [prime numbers](#).

How are the primes distributed amongst the positive integers? If a [random](#) integer is selected near to some large integer N , the [probability](#) that the selected integer is

prime is about $1 / \ln(N)$, where $\ln(N)$ denotes the [natural logarithm](#) of N .

For example, near $N = 1,000$, about one in seven numbers is prime, whereas near $N = 10,000,000,000$, about one in 23 numbers is prime.

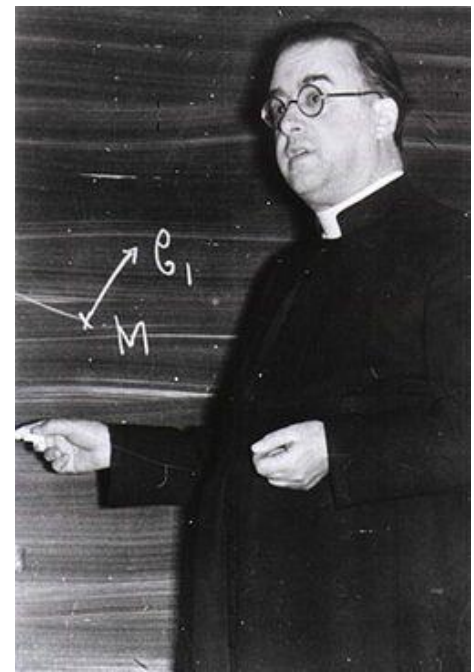
In other words, the average gap between consecutive prime numbers near N is roughly $\ln(N)$.

- Promotor of Georges Lemaitre
- First chairman of International Union of Mathematicians



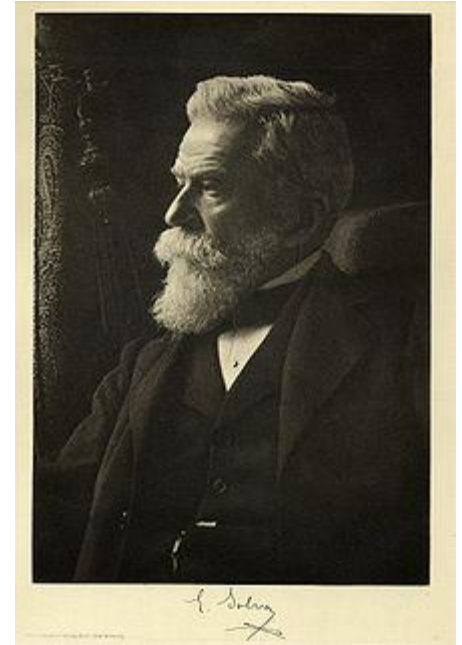
Mgr. Lemaitre (Charleroi 1894 – Leuven 1966)

- priest and scientist: cosmology, astrophysics
- Professor @ Leuven
- General theory of relativity:
Expanding Universe (1927) and 'Big Bang' (1931)
- Chairman of the Pontical Academy of Science
- PhD (1920) with Charles de la Vallée-Poussin
- PhD [1920](#) with [Charles de la Vallée-Poussin](#)
- Worked in Cambridge with Arthur Eddington and followed
Courses from Ernest Rutherford
- Studied the 'De Sitter' model
- 2nd PhD @ MIT 1927: *"The gravitational field in a fluid sphere
of uniform invariant density according to the theory of relativity"*
- Met with Hubble, Millikan, Slipher (spectral red shift):
inspiration for cosmic expansion
- Disbelief from Einstein !
- Next step: backward conclusion: big bang (originally nick name !)
- Founded the Leuven Computer Center in the 50-ties
- Nr 61 in most famous Belgian ranking



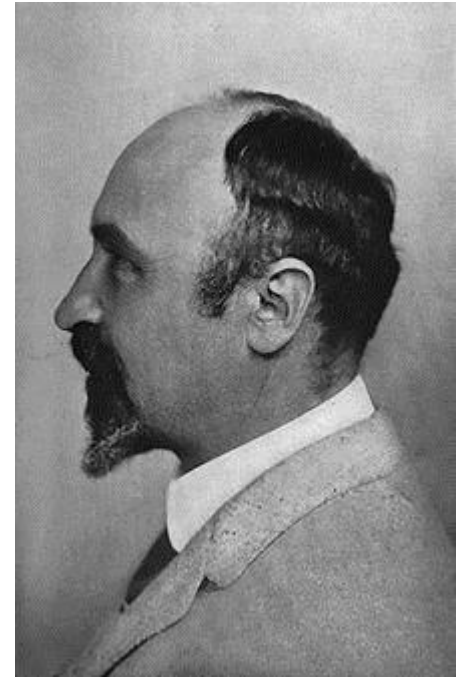
Ernest Solvay (Roosbeek 1838 – Brussels 1922)

- Belgian chemist and entrepreneur
- Developed process to make natriumcarbonate (soda-salt)
- Multibillionair by starting chemical world concern Solvay
- Institut Solvay @ Universite Libre de Bruxelles
- Famous Solvay Scientific Conference (this year 100th)
- Nr. 39 in most famous Belgian ranking



Leo Hendrik Baekeland (Sint-Martens-Latem, 1863-1944)

- Belgian – American chemist
- To America inspired by biography of Benjamin Franklin
- Velox – photo-paper: sold to Kodak for 750 000 usd
- Bakelite: First synthetic polymer from fenol & formaldehyde
- = polyoxybenzylmethyleenglycolanhydride patented
- multimillionaire
- nr. 32 in most famous Belgian ranking
- Time Magazine: one of 100 most influential 20th century people



Ilya Prigogine (Moskva 1917- Brussels 2003)

- Physics-chemistry, philosopher of science
- Dissipative structures
- Dynamical systems far from equilibrium
 - e.g. planet Earth – Sun – space
- Order from chaos
- Professor @ ULB
- Nobel prize Chemistry 1977



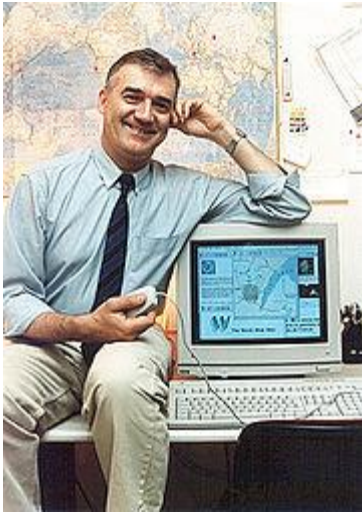
Contents

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Medicine

Science and engineering

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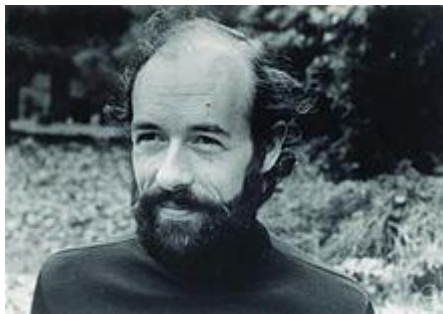
Robert Cailliau
CERN, father of
internet



Pattie Maes
Ambient intelligence
Medialab MIT



Ingrid Daubechies
Wavelets (mpg)
Princeton



David Ruelle
Chaos theory



Jean Bourgain
Fields Medal mathematics

Websites

- <http://www.famousbelgians.net/>
- http://www.eupedia.com/belgium/famous_people.shtml
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Belgians#Scientists