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Welcome to '450 Years of Being Yourself'. A podcast in which we'll be discussing Pride and in which we -Dr Looi van Kessel, Dr Pieter Slaman and I -will explore whether and how you could have been yourself for 450 years at Leiden University. My name is Camilla Kwende and I'd like to start by introducing you to Dr Looi van Kessel. I'm Looi van Kessel. I'm a lecturer in Literary Studies and Gender Studies at the Faculty of Humanities.

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And until last September, I was the chair of Leiden University's LGBT+ network. And so, in that capacity, we organised Leiden University's Pride boat together over the past year. That was the third time I'd done so. And this year (2025), our theme was '450 years of being yourself'. A theme that seemed to tie in rather strategically with

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Leiden University's 450th anniversary. But with that theme, we also thought: yes, there are some uncomfortable questions attached to it. Is it really true that people have been able to be themselves at Leiden University for 450 years? So the idea behind this podcast was to investigate whether this has actually been the case and whether we shouldn't add a critical note to that theme of Pride Leiden.

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I'd also like to introduce you to Dr Pieter Slaman. I'm Pieter Slaman. I'm a university historian here in Leiden. So I research the history of Leiden University itself. I'm also a historian of education. I research the history of education in the Netherlands. And I'm also an Assistant Professor at the Dual PhD Centre of the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs. We're based here in beautiful Leiden, at Rapenburg 70, where Leiden University's administrative offices are located.

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And that's where Pieter begins the conversation. I'm a university historian and a lecturer in history. And over the past year, we've been celebrating the university's 450th anniversary. I've been seen everywhere, and I've written an essay on academic freedom. What's more, I've also been asked by the university board to play a sort of pioneering role on the theme of academic freedom.

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And whilst writing that essay and reflecting on this, it struck me time and again that we've always had such fine ideals. Everyone is free to participate. Anyone with the right arguments, the right research, the right empirical evidence can say whatever they like. And

yet, of course, you constantly hear complaints all around you that, in daily practice, this isn't really the case. And the moment you strive for improvement -and I believe we all should –

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Can we think critically about this, take a critical look at it? How is it that we have such a lofty ideal of freedom here, which actually also entails a degree of equality -because otherwise, not everyone is free? And how is it that this complaint keeps circulating? This is one of those topics that can keep me awake at night. And that's why I find it very interesting to delve into this with you all today. Looi, how does this strike you? Yes, I've just mentioned that I helped organise the university boat during Pride Leiden. So I'm also very much involved here

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In my previous role as chair of the LGBT+ network, as chair of the network I championed the queer community at Leiden University and tried to make the queer community feel welcome at the university. But I'm also here as a lecturer in gender studies, and within gender studies I do a lot of research into forms of inclusion and exclusion, and

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I am also very interested in the question of academic freedom. Certainly when it comes to themes such as gender and sexuality, there are very heated debates these days. Heated debates that often seem to be more political in nature than academic. I wonder whether those political debates really need to be held at the university. Or whether, in doing so, we are actually losing sight of the university's purpose.

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Yes, that's one of the major contentious issues surrounding academic freedom. On the one hand, there's enormous freedom to say just about anything. And as a citizen, you also have freedom of expression, which is actually a slightly different concept in legal terms. But it's often said -and I think it's true -that if you invoke academic freedom, you must also provide empirical evidence or, at the very least, sound reasoning. And it's very complicated to disentangle these things, especially when it comes to social norms.

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A lot of things are said on a gut level without any empirical evidence, without any proof or without any logical reasoning to back them up. And yes, I think this is one of the major struggles facing the university -and not just in the 21st century, because we've been experiencing successive waves of emancipation for 200 years now, and we're currently in the midst of another one. That's what makes this so fascinating.

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Waves of emancipation -now, but also in the past. We're looking at 450 years of being yourself. And we want to bring the present and the past together. We want to explore both in this podcast. So, Pieter, how are we going to go about that? The three of us have been thinking together about the question of to what extent we could truly be ourselves during those 450 years, and we've each delved into a different period.

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Camille, you delved into the 18th-century archives of the municipal court. What did you find there? Well, today I'm bringing with me the story of Abraham Feijs. He was a 19-year-old tailor who was convicted of homosexuality -or, as it was called back then, 'sodomy'. During his hearing, he stated that he had never slept with a woman, and this provoked a huge reaction from the interrogators.

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And what is noticeable in the archives is that it is clearly stated that the interrogators hurled abuse at him. Because he slept with men rather than women -that is indeed what is noted. And they called him incorrigible. And that is the reason he was hanged. In Leiden.

So, he was sentenced to death here in the city because of his homosexual relationships.

Yes, indeed.

Can you also say whether the question of the difference between his sexual orientation and his behaviour came up during that interrogation?

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Does it make a difference whether you're attracted to people of the same sex but don't act on it, or whether you actually have sex with people of the same sex, for example? Yes, researchers do make a distinction between sodomy and homosexuality in terms of behaviour. At that time, when the question arose, yes, was it a matter of identity back then, or was it simply something people did? And what we see in Abraham Feist's story is that even though there is a lot...

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to say about it -well, people didn't identify as 'sodomites' in that sense back then.

The term 'homosexual' didn't even exist yet.

Yes, exactly. But people did know who they were, and they did engage in such behaviour in public; people often spoke of 'people of that sort' or 'people who are like that', and everyone also knew what was meant by the term 'familiarities'.

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So the men also made this clear to the judges during the trials. So, yes.¹

Yes, yes. I also find it very telling that the term used is 'sodomy' -from the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah, which were destroyed by God -referring to grave sexual immorality and all manner of depraved practices. So it was really viewed very much within that biblical context as something that is, in fact, forbidden by God. But the really fascinating thing is that some lads also appeared before the university tribunal, the 'Vierschaar'.

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on charges of "sodomy". And whilst those lads were not hanged, this tailor was. And that fits into a much broader pattern in which, for example, students who committed sexual violence against women in the city got off lightly or were treated with considerable leniency. There was a huge difference in the severity of sentences between that academic court and the city court. And you can really see this as nothing other than a class-based difference in sentencing.

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And that makes a huge difference when it comes to sodomy too, because in the 18th century there was a massive wave of executions relating to sodomy. Far more than before, in fact, and certainly more than afterwards, of course. In that same 18th century, you could be acquitted by the academic court. And this has a great deal to do with the fact that the university took on a sort of guardianship role towards its students, replacing that of their parents. Many students were still minors, and their parents were often far away.

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So the rector, who was responsible, amongst other things, for discipline at the university, took on a parental role. And there were a great many sons from the social elite. There were reputations -excellent reputations -that had to be protected. So the aim was, first and foremost, to keep matters out of the public eye. That didn't always work, but even then the

¹ **Sources:** Boon, Leo J. *'That godless crowd of people': the persecution of homosexuals in the Republic in the 1730s*. Edited by I. Schöffer and J. Roelevink, De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1997.

"The incorrigible Abraham Feijs ends his life on the gallows." *Leidsche Dagblad*, 14 September 1983, p. 3, <https://leiden.courant.nu/issue/LD/1983-09-14/edition/0/page/3>.

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"Pride versus the 18th-century crackdown on homosexuals." *National Archives*, 24 July 2019, <https://www.nationaalarchief.nl/beleven/nieuws/pride-versus-18e-eeuwse-klopjacht-op-homoseksuelen/>.

aim was still to let someone get away with it so that their future remained open, so that they could still make something of their lives.

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And that, of course, represents a huge disparity in class-based justice, but it is actually what society was built upon in the early modern period. Legal systems differed depending on the group you belonged to, the social class you belonged to, even the profession you practised, or whether or not you were a city dweller. And when you talk about sodomy -homosexuality in that period -that was very much part of that system. Pieter, is this also the period when the term 'Utrechtenaar' came into use?

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Yes, that's a fascinating point. The word 'Utrechtenaar' for a homosexual. Firstly, it's a euphemism, so you don't have to use a direct or explicit word. And secondly, it's a word that refers to another place, allowing you to say, 'Yes, that's something that happens beyond Woerden, but not here -not our problem.' No, exactly. So this is the time when the Utrecht court actually sentenced dozens of people to death for what was then called sodomy. It was really a very widespread phenomenon

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scandal at the time, and those punishments were also handed down because people feared divine retribution if homosexuality were to exist -hence, of course, the term 'sodomy'. And they felt that very harsh action had to be taken, and I think you have to view Feijs's death sentence in that context. A term like 'Utrechter' says it all -we don't talk about it, and it's not something that happens here. That's actually what the term implies. Yes, so we have this term 'Utrechter', and yet here in Leiden someone is sentenced to death. Camilla, why is it happening in Leiden as well?

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Yes, as an example, then. 'Sodomy' had been strictly forbidden since 1730. And then there was that witch hunt in 1733. And in the meantime, there's not much to report from Leiden, until Abraham Fais was made an example of in 1772. And how do you deduce that? That Abraham Feijs was used as an example? Well, what else was written is that...

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From the verdict, they can see that Abraham Feijs's body was simply left on public display for two hours. And remained hanging from the gallows. Yes, it remained hanging from the gallows. But then again, it isn't stated 'quite' like that. They do say that after the hanging -I don't think he was actually hanging at that point -his body was displayed for two hours at the

gallows... for two hours. And then it was sort of 'paraded' through the Diefsteeg, Breestraat and Galgsstraat.

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Which is absolutely horrifying. But you can see that they're trying to show everyone: 'Hey, this is what happens.' His body really became an example that was displayed to everyone throughout the city, wherever you lived in the city. Exactly. It's interesting that it falls into the most severe category of punishment -setting an example at the Galgewater -as it was quite normal to leave people on display for weeks on end on the gallows or on the wheel.

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And yes, I wasn't aware of this one before -that someone's body was actually paraded through the streets. Of course, it served the same purpose. Above all, I think it shows that this really was a crime of the most serious category, carrying the most severe punishment. You also mentioned just now that it hadn't happened for eight years prior to that, so it was certainly not an everyday occurrence for someone to be sentenced in such a way.

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That was the 18th century. But as Pieter said, we're covering several time periods in this podcast. Pieter, could you take us through to the 19th century? What story have you brought with you? In the 19th century, you see that this applies particularly to professors and students, who belonged to the upper-middle-class circle and who lived their lives very much according to the upper-middle-class norms prevailing in the Netherlands at that time. And those were quite strict sexual morals.

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So strict, in fact, that the norm was: sex should only take place between a man and a woman within marriage. Well, those morals were actually so strict that everyone knew full well that sex and love were being experienced on a massive scale outside that norm. And the interesting thing is, this didn't just apply to people who deviated from the heterosexual norm; it actually applied to everyone.

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So that means there was a very widely held double standard, whereby you behaved properly in public -in inverted commas, 'behaved properly' according to bourgeois morality -but behind closed doors all sorts of things happened that you wouldn't want to happen in public. And people were largely aware of this about one another. And that means that this double standard was, in fact, a kind of policy. It meant that a number of things were removed from criminal law. So homosexuality had also been removed from criminal law. In 1911, it was reintroduced.

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In 1911, it was decreed that homosexual relationships involving people under the age of 21 were prohibited. But that was a rule which was later tightened. But to return briefly to the 19th century, those hidden lives were actually more or less tolerated. So a great deal of research was carried out into prostitution during that period. The view was that, yes, it didn't conform to the norm, but men in particular needed somewhere to satisfy their urges. So it was tacitly permitted.

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But actually, this subject is much broader than that. There was a very widespread culture of hidden sexual contacts between men and women, but also between women and women, and men and men. And because it all took place in secret, that space did exist. And it all went on under that big cloak of 'we're not going to talk about this'. Well, quite a few stories are known of things that, on the one hand, were public scandals and, on the other, simply existed.

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There has been much speculation, for example, about the 19th-century professor of history, specifically Dutch history, Robert Fruin. He never married. In those days, that naturally meant marrying a woman. He had very close, affectionate friendships with men, and was even buried in the same grave as his closest friend. He never said anything about it in public. Nor is it at all clear whether this was a homosexual relationship.

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But that is actually not really all that relevant. Because what you do see very clearly here is that he kept his love life very much hidden. If you look at his correspondence, at his biographical material, not a word is said about it. And he was able to do that quite easily, because many more people actually did the same. Heterosexuals did that too, in fact, during that period. And then there were all sorts of suspicions, and there were also people who were very critical of Fruin and who used that against him. So that's another sign

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of that double standard. On the other hand, he did remain a professor right up until his death, and no disciplinary proceedings or anything of that sort were ever initiated against him. So I think the 19th century was truly a time of double standards, and because so many people, in defiance of those strict moral codes, led secret lives, there was also a certain scope for engaging in sexual relationships that didn't fit within the moral framework. And yes, that hypocrisy, that double standard,

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I actually feel that we're still living in that mindset to some extent, that it really is a sort of starting point from which our world today has emerged. And people who make comments now about, say, homosexuality -I'm fine with them doing that, but I don't need to see it. You see, that's the 19th century in a nutshell. And so you're saying that in the 19th century it all stayed very much behind closed doors -that it happened, but...

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above all, you mustn't talk about it and you mustn't show it. During that same period, you see other movements internationally. In England, for example, you have the Oxford School -people including Oscar Wilde, amongst others -who wrote essays on Greek love and essays on Shakespeare, suggesting that Shakespeare might have been homosexual. You don't see that movement at all in the Netherlands. I think this has a lot to do with that

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Calvinist atmosphere in the Netherlands, which was also becoming stricter. Because around 1901, Abraham Kuyper finally became Prime Minister and truly Calvinist policies could be implemented. And a whole host of things that had been more or less tolerated under the liberal governments were now suddenly explicitly banned. So that's where the ban on same-sex relations for those under 21 came from. Section 248 bis. Yes, exactly, exactly. That section of the law.

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Yes, the interesting thing is, I get the feeling that in Great Britain that liberal atmosphere was somewhat more dominant, whereas in the Netherlands you've always had that Calvinist attitude alongside it. And that meant that what was hidden had to remain even more hidden than in Great Britain. At the same time, we see various academic movements emerging in the 19th century. You get things like sexology.

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Researchers such as Havelock Ellis, Magnus Hirschfeld and Krafft-Ebing began to investigate sexual behaviour and homosexuality, and consequently coined terms such as 'homosexuality', 'urning' and 'sexual inversion'. That body of scientific work on sexuality in the 19th century -did it also influence how homosexuality was viewed in the Netherlands?

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Yes, I think so. And from a perspective of equality, you can't call that progress. You see, what changes is that it loses that religious connotation. So it's no longer sodomy, but it now really falls within the realm of medical theory, of pathology, of abnormalities. That's when a term

like 'homosexuality' comes into play. And that can mean that, whilst you're accepted as a person in your own right, you're still considered ill. So it's still something that needs to be combated, fended off and so on.

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And the story behind Article 248 bis from 1911 is very telling in this regard. Why was sex between people of the same sex under the age of 21 prohibited? The idea was that homosexuals cannot reproduce and therefore have no natural way of sustaining their group. That is why they need to recruit young people and have sex with boys under the age of 21. It explicitly referred to boys more often; as for girls, that was kept somewhat hidden. Women were a much less discussed topic.

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But sex with young people was banned to prevent 'healthy young people' -in inverted commas -from being recruited into what was considered an unhealthy group. And so, in 1911, the law became stricter than it had been previously, based on pathological reasoning rather than religious grounds. Yes, and these theories were the driving force behind this. They were accepted scientific theories. Psychology was also involved in this. That idea of recruitment -you see that too.

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It keeps cropping up in periods when there is significant social resistance to homosexuality and trans identity. So, in the 1970s, in the United States, you had Anita Bryant with her 'Save Our Children' campaign, in which she also campaigned against homosexual teachers. Because if a child had a gay teacher in front of the class, they might be 'recruited' into homosexuality. You see it more recently as well.

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A few years ago, here in Leiden during Leiden Pride, we had a drag queen story hour. At the time, Gideon van Meijeren from the FVD was protesting outside the library in Leiden. Because if children were to see a drag queen reading aloud, they too would be recruited into becoming transgender. So you see that narrative coming back time and time again. Yes, and actually, that is a direct continuation of that pathological way of thinking. Because you're not reasoning from the idea that this is simply one aspect of people's personalities; no,

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This is something people are recruited or coerced into; they're being driven mad. They're being driven mad, exactly. And that's why you see that 19th-century pathology doctrine, that scientific idea, really does have a very long lifespan -we're still dealing with it, aren't we,

Looi? Yes, I'd say so. But then it's very interesting how that double standard lives on as we move into the 20th century, Looi. Because you've also delved into...

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The real start of the struggle for emancipation for gay people in the 20th century. And that wasn't until well after the Second World War, was it?

Definitely. It wasn't really until the 1960s that the struggle for emancipation really got going. A struggle for emancipation did begin shortly after the Second World War, though. In Amsterdam, for example, there was the founding of the Shakespeare Club. That was actually quite soon after the Second World War. It grew out of the magazine *Levensrecht*.

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That was an activist magazine that championed gay rights. And in 1949, the Shakespeare Club in Amsterdam became the COC -the Culture and Leisure Centre. What a cleverly euphemistic term, actually. Yes, that term, 'Culture and Leisure Centre', was chosen -just like the name 'Shakespeare Club' -specifically to avoid making it too obvious that it was a gay rights movement.

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The COC, the Culture and Recreation Centre, quickly established a number of branches across the Netherlands. In 1951, for example, The Hague joined the movement. In The Hague, there was already a Louis Couperus Society that championed gay rights. So I think it's rather nice that the author Louis Couperus was already so closely associated with homosexuality in the 1940s and 1950s that anyone in the know understood -this is a club for Louis Couperus. That must have been for gay people

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. But the COC also quickly gained a reputation for pursuing a policy of assimilation. So the idea was that the COC believed that Section 248 bis should be abolished and that same-sex relationships should be permitted from the age of 16, just as they were for heterosexual relationships.

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However, to achieve that, it was particularly important not to stand out too much. Gay people had to show that they were just as good or just as normal as heterosexual Dutch people. And that policy of assimilation -'just act normal, that's crazy enough' -is also such a typically Dutch attitude, which began in the 1960s and increasingly involved younger gay men and lesbians

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to oppose it. The 1960s saw the second wave of feminism, the sexual revolution, and various emancipation movements emerging. Gay activists also rode that wave. In Leiden, for example, the Leiden Student Working Group on Homosexuality was founded in 1968. And that was a working group that fought even more fiercely

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against sexual discrimination. They were fierce opponents of Section 248 bis. They also demonstrated outside the House of Representatives and were strongly opposed to sexual discrimination within Leiden's student life. Because in Leiden's student life, there was no room for expressions of homosexuality either.

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And Leiden does, after all, have a reputation for being -or having been -somewhat upper-class and conservative. Do you feel that Leiden is fundamentally different from Amsterdam? I think that's difficult to say. Leiden still has the image of being very upper-class and conservative. I was a student here in the early 2000s, and back then, as a gay student, I didn't necessarily feel very welcome at

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Minerva or Augustinus. It's such a masculine culture with heteronormativity practically shouted from the rooftops. Yes, and I can well imagine that gay students in the 1960s and 1970s didn't dare to show themselves in the places that were specifically intended for students, or didn't necessarily dare to be themselves. I do have another good story in that regard.

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An anecdote, because you were just talking about that working group that started in Leiden in 1968. 1968 also happens to be the year in which the Hi-Fi, the Leiden Student Corps' own disco, opened. And almost immediately, the working group sent the so-called 'Pink Dance Peloton' there. So these were lads who went there to dance together, which was considered offensive behaviour. They were repeatedly thrown out onto the street by the doorman.

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But then they'd just turn up again the following week, and the week after that. And they kept doing this until even those corps members said, 'Come on, just leave them be,' and she referred to that as 'acceptance through confrontation'. And that shows you that the attitude of the Leiden Homosexuality Working Group is very different from that of the COC. The

Leiden Homosexuality Working Group says: we really must confront them, we must be able to be ourselves, and actually show people that we're different.

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And we must stop trying to conform to the heterosexual norm. That's precisely the policy of assimilation that the COC advocated.

In a way, it's sensible, because Leiden has always seen itself as very liberal. And if you want to live up to that, you really shouldn't object to people taking action in this way. So I do think it's tactically clever. It also clearly shows that Leiden isn't nearly as liberal as it likes to think it is.

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By the way, I was talking about anecdotes. Oscar Hammerstein, the lawyer, wrote his memoirs. Have you come across them? In the early 1980s, he was a member of Minerva and he wrote about that. Although I was openly gay, I never made a big deal of it myself in Leiden. But it later turned out that everyone had known all along. Good wine needs no bush. This is still very much that double standard of 19th-century morality at work there.

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That 'open secret' of homosexuality, really. You do it and nobody talks about it, but everyone actually knows about it anyway. Yes, what's particularly noteworthy in that regard is that Floris Michiels van Kessenich, who is still known in Minerva as the great pioneer, founded 'The Social and Dining Society of Distinguished Homosexual Gentlemen' in 1979. So you can see it reflected in the name. It does happen openly now, but I do wonder.

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How enjoyable it must have been to simply present yourselves as a group within that large social club. You set yourselves apart from the rest, and that probably involves a sort of social segregation as well, perhaps. We should ask the Minerva members about that. Yes, for the next podcast.

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We've come a long way now in terms of our social relationships with one another. But then, of course, the big question is: where do we stand now as a university? We're no longer talking about pathology. We're no longer talking about sodomy. In theory, a great many people believe you should be free to make your own life choices. But Looi, we still have a Pride event. Why do you think that's necessary? Where do we stand now? That's a very good question. You could almost say there's so much visibility of the LGBTI community

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these days, is a Pride event still really necessary? But when I speak to my students and staff -that is, other queer students and staff -I also hear quite a lot of dissatisfaction, including towards the university and the way in which the university protects the LGBTI community. You mentioned earlier that patronising role the university has assigned itself.

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That's a role that has changed significantly; it's no longer what it was in the 18th century, but it's still a role the university ascribes to itself. These days, the university also sees it as its duty to look after students' wellbeing. Everyone should be able to study at university. So there's much more focus on first-generation students and students who, well, have taken different paths.

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enter university. Yet not all LGBTI students perceive this role as equally successful. One example is that there is currently a student party within the university's representative body -the 'Vrijmoedige Studentenpartij' -which makes openly homophobic statements. And LGBTI students and staff are also angry that the university

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during orientation week -El Cid week, for example -gives the large Dutch student association a place at information fairs. This is also a student association that is accused of being far-right and openly homophobic. Well, for students like this, it's deeply frustrating that, on the one hand, the university says that everyone should be able to study at the university and be themselves.

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But at the same time, the university also allows student organisations to operate that are specifically opposed to LGBTI students. Yes, I think this really is the central dilemma facing universities in the 21st century. Because we want academic freedom in its most radical form. So we say that any question must be allowed to be asked -any statement about what you believe must be allowed to be made. That's all

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true, but anyway, that's about academic debate. It's about science. It's about what you've found in your sources, in your experiments or in your theories. And then there's that other conversation. That can be about anything and everything, even if you know absolutely nothing about it. And we're all allowed to do that, because we have freedom of expression

here. And in the University Council, those new parties can then invoke the freedom to take political stances in such a body. But bringing those two together in one

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university is actually a complete absurdity. Because it's completely unclear when someone is making a statement based on expertise, evidence and theories -and is therefore entitled to do so under the banner of academic freedom -and when you're allowed to shout out all sorts of things, no matter what, by invoking that freedom of expression. And we really must work together to untangle this knot. Because the moment you genuinely want to make scientific progress, you cannot, in my view, tell certain groups: 'You're not allowed to take part'

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because of your sexual orientation, because of your background, because of whatever. That's simply a very old standard. I mean, Clevering G.'s argument in 1940 was also about this: it's not acceptable to dismiss Professor Meijers because he's Jewish; it's about the quality of his academic work, of his arguments -that must take precedence. And yes, in a completely ideal world, I'd also say: keep those two things separate. If, in academic debate, you put forward your views based on your evidence, then you must be able to do so.

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Of course, it becomes tricky when things are said that harm other people, exclude them or deny their identity. And in my view, this usually happens not on scientific grounds at all, but on the basis of gut feeling. And that is something that really has absolutely no place in scientific debate. Ideally, you should even be able to separate the two to the extent that you can say, 'Well, on scientific grounds I have a certain view of your personality, but I still value you fully, 100 per cent, in the same way as I value everyone else'

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, but perhaps I'm being a bit utopian here. Yes, you're actually proposing to completely separate the scientist as a person from the science they practise, or from the scientific argumentation. But I wonder whether that's even possible. Personally, I don't really believe in the idea of the neutral scientist, because we all approach things from a specific perspective

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. We identify with a gender, we identify with a nationality, or we are racialised in a certain way. We come from a particular social class, and that background also determines the way we view the world. The feminist theorist Donna Haraway calls this 'situated knowledge'. We all view the world through a particular lens, and that lens

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ensures that we do or do not see certain things. For a very long time, science has been practised by white, heterosexual Anglo-American or European men. And that also means that things have often gone unnoticed or unrecognised by the scientific community. Many feminists and scientists of colour have had to force their way into that debate since the 1970s and 1980s

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so that their perspectives might also be taken into account. I think a very striking example of this is that, for instance, the way a heart attack manifests itself in women is by no means always recognised in the same way as it is in men. This is because, in medical science too, the male body has always been regarded as the scientific norm. As a result, differences between male and female bodies are simply not always properly recognised by medical science.

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Yes, I'm not disagreeing with you here. Perhaps on theoretical grounds, but not on practical grounds. Because in practice, this is certainly how it works. I would just like to hold on to the principle that people should be able to argue their points without regard to personal circumstances. So that is, of course, very complicated. You're saying now that it does indeed matter where you come from -your personal background -in order to be able to see something and to be able to say something. At the same time, you're letting in a sort of Trojan horse, because you're then saying

35:40

'we're going to select people based on their backgrounds, for example, and use that to send messages'. I'm not saying it happens, but you're opening the door to those possibilities. And if you say, 'No, we'll keep the content, the person and their personal background strictly separate from one another', then in theory you should be able to have an open system in which everyone has the greatest possible freedom. It's just that, well, I do fear this demands somewhat superhuman qualities of us. I wonder whether that

36:10

that ideal situation can ever be realised at all. A scientist must, of course, be able to distance themselves from their own personal situation. So, from your perspective on the world, you may have a specific view of the world and, as a result, recognise certain things more easily or be more attuned to them. But then, of course, you have to take the step of testing that personal observation scientifically.

36:39

And I think that's a particularly important point that we must hold on to. Yes, and a challenge for all of us, of course, is that what you see and what you think is, to a large extent, determined by where you come from and who you are. But the willingness to change one's viewpoint nonetheless, when presented with very strong scientific arguments in favour of doing so, is also crucial if we are to move forward together.

37:05

Yes, that's why I say that, ideally, we should have a strict separation between the content and the personal, whilst knowing that, of course, that's not really the case, because we're all limited, far from perfect, suboptimal strivers. Yes, and that's why I sometimes have my reservations about the debate: 'Oh, should we just invite anyone and everyone to the university? No matter what homophobic or transphobic remarks this person makes?'

37:34

From the perspective of academic freedom, you'd say, yes, we should be able to have that debate. People should be able to be invited to the university to express their views, so that we can engage in debate with them. But in practice, I wonder whether that debate is actually conducted in that way. Isn't it all too common at university for people to be speaking to a friendly audience, and for people to be invited simply to reinforce a particular narrative?

38:03

that is already shared amongst those inviting that person. Yes, there are two different factors at play here. The first is: is that debate actually about scientific content? Does someone really put forward an argument against the inclusion of homosexuals at university, in society or anywhere else, based on scientific evidence? Is that really a scientifically substantiated argument, or is it a feeling, an opinion or a tradition?

38:29

But the second point is that our scientific debate fails to make proper progress and is hindered and undermined the moment we start excluding certain groups. That was the reason why Johan Huizinga once expelled a National Socialist from this university on academic grounds. And why Clevering stood up for his Jewish colleague Meijers. It is not his background that determines whether he produces good academic work, but the quality of his work.

38:53

And I think the university really must set a strict standard in this regard. If someone comes here to speak with an argument that a particular category of people must be categorically excluded, then you are damaging scholarship. And in my view, as a university, you really ought to say: 'This is a violation of the academic freedom of that other group you are now

targeting.' So how do you think the university should act and respond to the outspoken student party which, for example, has stated in *De Mare* that a department such as

39:21

gender studies -which, incidentally, is my department -might well be abolished. Yes, they're slippery; they'd say anything could be abolished. Of course, that's not the sort of statement in which they actually say what they really mean. That's always the tricky bit: what lies beneath, the underlying message, is so toxic. But what I think needs to happen is that this standard must be constantly reiterated. Everyone participates on the basis of contribution, quality and arguments. If you don't agree with that,

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then you need to say so now. So be open. I think the universities shouldn't give people associated with this party the chance to hide what they really think about this in somewhat veiled terms. Come on everyone -to put it bluntly -just lay it on the table. What do you really think? What is your actual position? And is that based on science or not? And if not? Then you've had your say. I think that's where the line is drawn. So, in fact, this is a call to the Executive Board to get that message across

40:19

louder and more consistently. That's it.

40:25

And that's how we'll end this podcast -with a call to action, really. In this podcast, we explored this topic together. We looked at the extent to which you could be yourself at Leiden University over the past 450 years, and how you can be yourself today and in the future. Thank you for listening to this podcast, and we look forward to seeing you next time.

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