



Mary Louise Pratt (2005/1991) from Arts of the **contact zone** (in Bartholomae, David & Petrosky, Anthony (eds.), *Ways of Reading – An Anthology for Writers*, Boston & New York: New York/St. Martin's, p. 519.: *I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today. Eventually I will use the term to reconsider the models of community that many of us rely on in teaching and theorizing and that are under challenge...*



We are 3 professionals differently engaged in artistic research, with each our take on Spinoza's *Ethica*. What we have to show, tell and share on this post-humous work of Spinoza, will be differently aligned at your end, than before the Corona pandemic: since video is added to the 'equation of alignment'.

Dániel Péter Biró is a composer (Bergen). Bojana Cvejic (Brussels) is a philosopher working with dance & choreography. I am a visual anthropologist (Oslo) working with principally in the design-field. We have different practices. Our theoretical takes on *Ethica* differently "bleed" from our practices.

In addition, there is video: which means that you—each one of you in the audience—are not lost into the darkness of an auditorium, or a black box, but are each one of you located at home. Under regular circumstances this would be your comfort-zone. Our challenge now is to make it a contact-zone.

This is a concept from Mary Louise Pratt's "[The arts of the contact zone](#)". We are presently living in the edgelands of contamination and connection. Or, more precisely, we are living with a temporarily enhanced awareness of it. We have to align theory, practice and video into our domestic reception.

Which is why the title of our 3-way talk—Receptions of Spinoza—makes the problem of 'alignment' in Spinoza's ethics, particularly relevant: if we each compared our diaries on how we are adapting theory, practice and video to the present work-conditions, we are like to be surprised by the variety.

But if our computer-screens are windows to our contemporary culture—whether we are working, educating ourselves or seeking entertainment—our home-windows are now theatres for another sort of spectacle: in April 2020 Space X is rocketing trains of sunlit [Starlink satellites](#), to globalise 5G.

While industrial designer [Elon Musk](#) is doing his business with Tesla and SpaceX—offering a truly cosmic spectacle right outside our windows—we are being faced with the architecture of a celestial dome (finally) looking back, while at the same time as it is being light-polluted by our (owned) public eye.

Spinoza's relevance, in this context, goes beyond his engagement with the high-tech of his day—his lens-fabrication for e.g. Christiaan Huygens telescope— and what Baruch and Christiaan may have observed together looking into the sky with it in May 1655, to his ideas on metaphysical accountability.

This is arguably what his work *Ethica* has to offer: his breakdown of a stepwise procedure—modelled on geometry—to account for human life-worlds, in questions that are fundamentally exceeding them: how this scale and our human life-worlds can connect. Our time is short, the task is huge.

On this backdrop, we are using this occasion to look into artistic research: how practice, theory and mediation align in Dániel Biró's project *Sounding Philosophy*, and how this work with Spinoza's *Ethica*, reverberates with other alignments in dance, choreography, design and the Corona pandemic.