*21 years old
Karl Marx (1839)*

If Karl Marx's idea of the *alienation of work* was a great one, what might be the historical explanation for the violence on that idea, which occurred as it became *applied*? Proposition: any act/decision that fails at *extending* the idea as it is applied, is a violence committed on that idea and its owners.

Evidently, the people who own an idea may themselves commit that violence. The resource proposed by dialectical materialism, as presently understood, is that the ethical *delivery*—based on an *idea* of ethics—may commit violence to that idea, affecting both people and institutions.

The track-record of ethical *delivery* feeds back into the *idea* of ethics: this is the gist. The value of the idea and the value of the work put into it are related. Indeed they are *one* in substance. Indeed, if formulated at this level —the unity of *thought* and *extension*—it is Spinoza's *Ethics* we belabour.
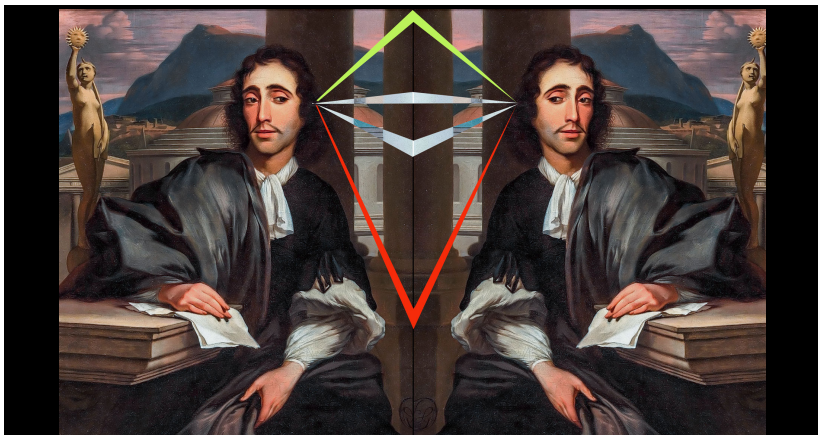
This flyer-series is dedicated to the development of a theory-prototype of *ethical practice* applied to a specific area: which is the *alienation of work*. According to the Marxist usage, the *alienation* of work occurs as the worker is *paid* for her work and generates the capitalist affordance of *surplus value*.

More than a simple economic transaction, the alienation of work directly affects the worker's sense of *self*: who she can be as an individual and the social category she belongs to. I use the concept of 'category' instead of 'class' since the latter—social classes—have become scrambled/fuzzy.

A contemporary example of alienation could be the managerial competence developed in the art-field. Not as an external practice added to the artistic competence, but that (conforming with dialectical materialism, to this extent) with an evaluation in perception of *what* is part of artistic competence.

That is, how to write applications, formulate *project proposals* and manage artistic projects—as critically addressed by [Bojana Kunst](#)—becomes part of the artistic competence, in the sense that it will count as the part of the evaluation of artistic competence in an increasing number of settings.

Arguably, this will put ethical *integrity* at risk. In the sense that artists use less time on developing—and hatching—artistic contents, and processing the consequences emerging in their wake (i.e., after they have been brought into existence), and more time on project management and accountability.

However, the problem runs deeper that those linked to two opposing, and competing, forces/priorities. But relate more broadly to two interlinked tasks and their occasions: **1)** rounding up; **2)** following up. This is not only linked to artists being poor and pressed. Since it is the same in industry/business.

A priori this is surprising since it (at least arguably) relates to the value of work; in the sense of claiming *ownership* and sharing *provenance*. The 'will to history'—if there is anything such—is rather weak in both cases. This is surprising, but perhaps explainable. But also tricky: hence this series.

It derives from the points: if we establish a protocol for rounding up process and following up outcomes, what guarantees do we have for such a protocol not to turn out as just another managerial item, and hence removing ourselves even more than presently from an ethical agenda⸮

Is there an understanding of the tasks and its occasions that might eschew the liberalist call for self-administration⸮ Could it be a similar kind of question that seems to haunt intellectual ideas as soon as they become *applied*⸮ Such as the application of actor network theory (ANT, *#6th wall*)⸮

This might be an interesting lead to pursue. What is it—in the moment of application—or the attack, to use a *musical* term, that determines whether applying idea is 'barely managing', or reaches for a *degree* of excellence needed to *extend* the idea. Evidently, also Marx's idea. History has failed⸮