**

every forty days, a language dies.
the death of a language is a silent death.

it's the kind of death without any mourning relatives.
it's the kind of death that doesn't make it to the news.

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Anatomy:
Where does one word end and another begin?

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English provides a false impression of access, till you find yourself writing someone far away from the center of an injury of *not* feeling understood, enclosed by villages, whose names you cannot pronounce and whose voices you cannot understand.

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this page was written in response to a reading group with Keeyaa Chaurey hosted by Maitiú Cárthaigh and Aleksandra Komsta.

A child who spends ten years in Danish school, is a child who spends ten years learning speed reading. Ten years practicing what looks like a marathon within sentences. National public tests in reading as a part of a yearly curriculum. There are many reasons why, a government likes to measure its children's pace in running over words within the sentences. I, myself, was always confused, when my eyes searched for the colour of the car and the placement of the ball within the narrative, as the question pointed to specific attentions, while the clock slowly clicked down. Why was it not the colour of the ball and the placement of the car, they liked to ask? Giving less value to the words and information that were not directed by the question, I was taught that the intention of reading was finding information, fast.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire writes how "the educated individual is the adapted person, because he or she is better 'fit' for the world."[1]
In the Danish educational system, to be a fast reader, is to be better fit for its world. The nation-state with its statistics likes to believe a fast reader is a fast learner. Maybe it's an economical thinking; a fast learner saves capital, as a fast learner spends less time in a classroom and needs less attention from a teacher. And so, learning is efficient and measured in time, which we who were 'educated' know; time is not meant to be measured in singular form, time is always uncountable. The saying *time equals capital*, is the measurement of neoliberal time - on the page and outside of it.

[1] Freire, Paulo: Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Continuum, 2000

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it begins in your bank and extends to your throat

I like to write in my bed. A position I thought my partner for a long time would call out for "not being very economic." As a non-native English speaker, I connected a position that is bad for my back to a profession that is bad for my bank - a connection I strongly believed in for months, as overwork eventually leads to back pain.

I am on a full train when he texts me:
"Are you in an ergonomic sitting position on the floor?"

Sitting in a full train on the floor, I tell him I had for months thought he had been telling me "economic" and that the connection had seemed logical to me within the economy we live in;
desperate postures framed to be justified by profitability.

Looking up *ergonomics*, I learned that it is the science of how people interact with their working conditions, an overall process of improving the efficiency of the body. Disciplining the body was and is one of the driving conditions in the formation of a capitalist workforce.[2]

I want to separate my body from finance.

In the post-industrial economy, most bodies are attached to screens and stasis. Ergonomics is meant to help me improve my bodily capital and organize the individual body toward the highest productivity.

If you are a writer, it asks you:
"How are your writing conditions?"
You write a sentence, and it will ask you:
"Yes, but how fast was it written?"

I want to separate my words from capital, my body from finance.

[2] Federici, Silvia: Capitalism and the Sexual Division of Labour, Autonomedia, 2009

Franco Berardi writes about how the production of value no longer passes through the flesh: Today, signs produce signs without first being materialized in the production of goods.[3] Labour has become increasingly immaterial; a transition into cognitive capitalism, which has defined "the material brain and mind as the factories of the 21st century." [4] But immaterial labour is not so immaterial; my body might not be directly linked to capital, but it has inscribed the automation of the words and the sentences it has both written and objected to.

Within internet search engines, Frédéric Kaplan speaks of the indexicalization of language: "Two algorithms define the reduction of linguistic meaning to economic value via a Google search: the first finds the various occurrences of a word, the second links words with monetary value." [5] Language is in the process of automatization and every time you search for a word, you will be provided with its attachments having the highest economic value. But similarly, we, you and I contribute to its economic value by providing our information.

Capital is dead, but what if what's next is something worse? McKenzie Wark asks and looks upon how intellectual property is the new capital.
Differentiating between a capitalist class that owns the means of production, and a vectoralist class that owns the vectors of information[6], Wark looks at how the algorithms we feed with our information not only rank, sort, and assign particular information, but also how they are fed to control our attention: "Not capital but the vector enters the flesh and commands it, and not just as meat, but also as information, through monitoring its states, through modifying its functions with drugs that alter chemical signals, through patenting aspects of life as design." [7] Intellectual property and our words fed into search engines do not just control the physical labour of the body, but it goes deeper into how it is biopolitics[8] of living. Biopolitics of living which has turned into neuropower[9] within cognitive capitalism, as it is focused on optimizing thought; and so, the nervous system has become the new focus of governmentalization.[10]
It has become *the language* that alters the language of the body itself.

[3] Berardi, Franco "Bifo": The Uprising – On Poetry and Finance, Semiotext(e), 2012
[4] Neidich, Warren: Glossary of Cognitive Activism, Archive Books, 2019
[5] Berardi, Franco "Bifo": The Uprising – On Poetry and Finance, Semiotext(e), 2012
[6] Wark, McKenzie: Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?, Verso, 2019
[7] Ibid.
[8] Term coined by Michel Foucault:
By using it here I am not referring to governmental power, but rather the power of a vectoralist class.
[9] An extension of what Foucault named *biopower.*
[10] Neidich, Warren: Glossary of Cognitive Activism, Archive Books, 2019

Back on the train, my position on the floor is non-ergonomic. My writing is inefficient: Every 15 minutes, I am either interrupted by a passenger wanting her luggage or Deutsche Bahn announcing its continued delay. I dive into the Google engine on *ergonomics* online, Google asks me if I am not interested in the topics on *leadership* or *national economy.*

”We are breeding a new generation of human beings who will learn more words from a machine than from their mothers,” anthropologist Rose Khon Goldsen wrote in 1977.[11] Today, I am the breed of this new generation. My mother taught me many words, but *national economy* and *ergonomics* were never any of them. It’s never the child that remembers its first word. It’s more often always the mother.

I text her:
“Do you remember my first *word*?”
She responds within an hour:
“Maybe *mama*? Can’t really remember.”

In her book *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed writes about how objects are never neutral but carry their histories of arriving at a place.[12] Within language, words are similarly shaped by social actions, which is partly forgotten when we start to take them forgiven. Words are always historically charged and arrive at a language because of nearness. In other words, a word such as *mama* exists in various languages; a word that crosses our paths daily, and a word that is part of our spoken habits. Habits that come from nearness; nearness being within the distance ergonomics never previously had.

Looking up the etymology of *ergonomics*, I find that it originates from the Greek word *ergon* meaning *work*, merging together with *economics* and forming the word *ergonomics* in the 1950s.[13] In the same period, The Third Industrial Revolution has its origin; what some historians have named The Information Age. Together with facilitating a foundation for the word *ergonomics*, it brought an economy centered around digital technology and automatization. A word such as ergonomics might not be near enough yet to be common vocabulary, but as language increasingly gets automatized, this might change. I think about how Goldsen wrote that today’s generation will learn more words from machines than from their mothers and what kind of future language will have.

[11] Berardi, Franco “Bifo”: The Uprising – On Poetry and Finance, Semiotext(e), 2012
[12] Ahmed, Sara: Queer Phenomenology, Duke University Press, 2006
[13] Oxford English Dictionary: Ergonomics

A child screams through the train and disrupts Deutsche Bahn's next announcement. I cannot help myself from thinking: As neoliberalism eliminates anything that is not productive, what will be the first word of any future children as language increasingly gets automatized;

will it be *national economy* or ~~*mama*~~ *(mother)*?

Sadie Plant writes about the impact of the digital age on social structures in her book *Zeroes and Ones*: "All digital computers translate information into the zeros and ones of machine code. These binary digits are known as bits (...) The zeroes and ones of machine code seem to offer themselves as perfect symbols of the orders of Western reality."[14] Not only is national economy one of the words with the most monetary value, but its occurrence is also embedded in binary digits and algorithms that discriminate; discrimination that becomes writing of bodies, as search engines like Google provide biased racist and gendered search results that "reflect the norms of the search company's commercial partners (..) and often reflect our lowest and most demeaning beliefs, because these ideas circulate so freely and so often that they are normalized and extremely profitable."[15]
If search engines are increasingly where we look for small pieces of information, we must question which bodies govern the language of machines. Those words do not only write bodies digitally, but they become the writings that form our habits and representations. They teach us subconsciously which words to attach to which skin. "Lessons" that are not choices, when they are taught in a language that was chosen for us.

Returning to my position on the floor, I want to stretch my backbone into saying; an ergonomic posture is not separate from the economic exchangeability of words. It is written by it. It begins in your bank and extends to your throat when the words we are taught, speak, and provided with are the ones with the highest economic profitability. To separate my body from finance seems undoable when my vocabulary has been inscribed by the same machines that turned words into capital in the first place. Cognitive capitalism framed neuropower to be the new governmentalization of optimizing body and thought.

[14] Plant, Sadie: Zeroes and Ones, Fourth Estate, 2016
[15] Noble, Safiya Umoja: Algorithms of Oppression, New York University Press, 2018

Neuropower does not let the body be.

It alters *it*. An alternation assisted by sciences like ergonomics and search engines. The symptoms of this form of capitalization are; profitable posture, writing as currency and
a language that alters the language of the body itself.

A language that does not leave *ergonomics* to stay within this sentence
but extends it to be written by the body,
letting the body write it into and onto the muscles.

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My sister was ten when she asked:
Why does it say little heart everywhere on the walls?

We were waiting for the metro when I realized what she was referring to was 小心[16], which occurs in most public spaces of China; what in Mandarin directly translates to *little heart*, but which with its two characters means; *be careful*.
My sister didn't grow up with Mandarin; she only recently started learning.
For a long time, I would tell my grandmother *little heart*, when there would be an extra step beneath her feet. What my sister brought to my attention, was what anyone who grows up with a language takes for granted. Growing up with the Mandarin language, which I left before I learned it fully, my sister made me reflect upon how being inside a language is assuming something as fundamental as a shared understanding. I was thirteen when she asked me. For thirteen years I had never once thought of the many little hearts around the metro and how being careful in Mandarin implies making one's heart smaller to protect oneself.

Sometimes, when the metro gets too packed, I imagine my organ turning small.

[16] xiǎo xīn = *little heart* and/or *be careful* in Mandarin

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At the airport I try to familiarize my tongue and thoughts with
a language I have not moved fully with for the past four years.
Pronouns were always confusing to me;
why do we have different words to describe the entity of one subject?

As a child I learnt to say 我[17] to point to me.
A pronoun English would translate to *I*.
One character within a sentence supposedly representing me.

Later I learnt about 我们[18].
Add a 们 to 我 and your *I* supposedly becomes *we*.

I could never fully separate my *I* from *we*,
as such a separation didn't necessarily visibly exist.

To say *we*, I partly always had to say *I*.

As I learnt English,
I learnt that within this language my *I* is always partly left to itself.

English taught me I have a self.
Mandarin taught me my self is a relational self.

Whenever I write in English,
I remind myself of how *I* is never just an I,
but the result of so many other tongues.

[17] wǒ = *I* in Mandarin
[18] wǒ men = *we* in Mandarin