

Beyond the Imaginary Party!

§1

Isolated acts of resistance to the might of capital take place in the interstices of this might. A university lecturer gets a rush twice a year when he mentions Marx in his lectures, but he only gets a rush because Marx has been made so contentious. A barista thinks she is fucking over her boss when she gives her favourite customer a discount on his long black, but she only thinks she is fucking over her boss because she knows she can't let him find about it. A beneficiary feels like she's doing okay because she works a few hours a week under the table, but she only feels like she's doing okay because she gets more than she's supposed to.

§2

These acts of resistance are already accounted for by capital. Letting university lecturers briefly discuss Marx insures the 'democratic' nature of capital, dissenting ideas are given their 15 minutes, but only as one 'opinion' among many; the university lecturer can resist by giving time even to 'contentious opinions'. The barista must strictly enforce the rules of the market, excusing exceptional circumstances; the boss already accounts for the 'losses' suffered in such exceptional circumstances in its accounts. The beneficiary can work a few hours under the table because, as every economist knows, the black market is great training for the white market; the beneficiary can break the rules because she needs to learn them.

§3

These acts are incorporated into our own imaginary. The university lecturer experiences his Marxist utterances as if they will themselves change things; he is now a 'radical academic'. The barista experiences her unsanctioned discounting as if it was really hurting her boss; she is now a 'recalcitrant worker'. The beneficiary experiences her untaxed income as if she had beaten the system; she is now a 'dole bludger'.

§4

This imaginary undergoes a metamorphosis into a glue that holds the might of capital together. The university lecturer, realising the dreams of his youth twice a year in the lecture theatre, doesn't build the party or organise his workplace. The barista, feeling she's fucked over her boss, doesn't say anything when he makes her work late or cuts her hours. The beneficiary, knowing she's breaking the rules, doesn't want to do anything to draw attention to herself.

§5

This imaginary-glue is the stage upon which new figures might emerge. Something happens and the university lecturer decides to turn theory into practice; his imagination is disrupted by the possibility of a real resonance between ideas and the material world. Something happens and the barista realises she's the one being fucked over; she no longer believes she is fucking over her boss and has to come up with a new way of thinking about her work. Something happens and the beneficiary doesn't know what to do anymore; she knows her position is precarious but she needs to think of a way out of it.

§6

From the perspective of this imaginary-glue-stage, these new figures take the form of thought. The university lecturer stops thinking about whatever it was he was or wasn't thinking about, and starts thinking about how he might really realise the dreams of his youth; he thinks in order to decide what steps to take. The barista stops fantasising about her day off, and starts fantasising about how she might change the world; she thinks because she doesn't know what to do. The beneficiary stops worrying about how she is going to pay her bills, and starts worrying about how she can find others like her; she

thinks in order to create new possibilities.

§7

On this stage, the enemy takes the form not of individuals, but of other figures of thought. The university lecturer is barraged with opposition in his head, every step he can think of is too radical, too disruptive, too old fashioned; he is scared to associate too closely with his thoughts. The barista knows what her friends would say if she told them what she was thinking, her thoughts are just cute little daydreams; she is embarrassed by her thought. The beneficiary has an intense paranoia, if anyone finds out what she's thinking they might cut her benefit, or find out about her job; she knows just how dangerous her thoughts are.

§8

The key enemy takes the form not of disagreement, but of compromise. The university lecturer can easily rebuff his conservative colleagues, they do not worry him; it is his liberal colleagues who are the most threatening, they say, 'yes you're right, but you don't need to go so far...' The barista stops putting up with her boss's shit, but is surprised when he offers her a promotion; she finds it hard to resist the temptation of settling for a small pay rise. The beneficiary knows the risks involved with following the consequences of her thought and is not sure if she can convince others to join her; she thinks perhaps she should set her sights lower.

§9

Combatting this enemy is a deciding factor in unbinding the glue that holds the might of capital together. The university lecturer creates a situation that exposes the reality of university life to his liberal colleagues; through action he induces an encounter that allows new figures of thought to proliferate and resonate with his own thought. The barista doesn't settle for any small improvement in her own condition; she realises her own power and starts talking to her colleagues and planning action. The beneficiary realises it's all or nothing, and she won't settle for nothing; she makes a poster, organises a meeting, and finds others just like her.

— Jonathan King