

xxxxxxx

Dr. Hansen

WRI 1000

30 April 2017

Deciphering Dimitriadis

According to Dimitriadis the paranoid style is intensely more palpable today than it was during Hofstadter's exploration primarily due to the "steady erosion of the public sphere and the social safety net". The public sphere refers to a social environment in which people congregate to discuss societal tension and the means to act upon the basis of this tension. Without a place to communicate issues surrounding a community, the excessive strain of disagreement can promote a sense of intense isolation in members within the community, which ultimately leads to the paranoid mentality and "eliminationist rhetoric" as Dimitriadis coins. He goes on to explain that our current society asks us to build our social infrastructure without reliance on others, and to appear without vulnerability. However, this lack of vulnerability is our greatest weakness. While self-sufficiency is seen as a prized personal attribute, it sparks a lack of interaction and communication with others that is detrimental to the functionality of the greater society. Before reading this article I was curious as to how the paranoid style gained momentum in its hosts, but the principles of isolation through eliminationist tendencies sheds light on the process.

It seems that the paranoid style focuses on the destruction of a society based on the lack of resolution that the politically paranoid envision. It was difficult to make the connection between the utopian themed transcendent thinking that Dimitriadis described and the inevitable destruction that was thematic in Hofstadter's interpretation. At the base of paranoia is the

Commented [HT1]: He doesn't coin this phrase (he attributes it to someone else), but yes, good.

Commented [HT2]: Can you elaborate a little on this?

Commented [HT3]: Does it focus on this destruction, or does it envision such a destruction?

constant suspicion and foreboding inkling that eventually develops into an overarching mentality. While the obsession with the systems at fault seem to be at the forefront of paranoia, behind that curtain is, perhaps, the goal of a utopian society that is without the cause of suspicion. That is, if a group is suspicious of the Catholic church, the utopian counterpart would be a world free of Catholicism. This is what Dimitriadis states is the ultimate “collapsing of the two - the conscripting of “facts” into transcendent claims . . . at the heart of “bad faith”. The convergence of both factual evidence and an imaginary telos is the origin of political paranoia.

Commented [HT4]: Interesting. Would it help to present the passage from Dimitriadis at the beginning of the paragraph (o-n contract) instead of at the end?

The claim that political paranoia has root in fact is reinforced in Dimitriadis’ essay, but is restated to urge that only select evidence is used to intrigue followers. For the facts presented are not used for the purpose of providing context, but rather used in a way to further fuel the separation of ideals. Dimitriadis explains that “These debates are increasingly fueled by ‘evidence’ - but a particular approach to evidence . . . The result is more and more people feeling more and more intensely about specific issues”. This sparks my interest in generating questions about who takes part in political paranoia and why they are investing their time and energy into a cause without addressing the opposing argument. Perhaps the desire to find surrounding knowledge before taking a side is veiled by the intensity or entertainment of one path. That being said, political paranoia is not subject only to uneducated members of the population, but only those that are unwilling to put in the effort to research the other side of the argument. This relates back to the decrepit “public sphere” mentioned before, and there is a limited arena for these conversations to take place and educate members of the community therefore promoting a misguided information and one sided facts.

Commented [HT5]: This is a great passage. What are you taking out?

Commented [HT6]: Yes, this is worth exploring more. Is he talking about evidence, or the way that evidence is used? (Misused?)

With these ideas in mind, Dimitriadis is writing regarding how the patterns of development in our society feed into how susceptible the community is to such radical schools of

thought. Harboring an eliminationist perspective will lead to segregation of morals ultimately resulting in an increase of politically paranoid individuals. The tension necessary to cause an overwhelming suspicion does not arise out of thin air, but rather when competing evidence is presented supporting each statement and there is not a valid platform present for discussion. The absence of communication is the initiative required for eliminating the potential for compromise, thus resulting in two radically different and equally passionate groups of thinkers. Stemming from opposing viewpoints is inevitable distrust, and when this distrust renders itself in a national setting, such as a political arena, political paranoia is on exhibit.

Commented [HT7]: ?

Commented [HT8]: This starts to feel abstract. Can you root it more specifically in the passage you've explored above?

This is a strong draft. You have chosen some great passages from Dimitriadis for thinking more deeply about the concept of the paranoid style, and your exploration of those passages here does a lot of work for reframing and clarifying Dimitriadis's ideas for readers who may be unfamiliar with his essay. The first two paragraphs are the strongest in this regard. That said, I really like the focus of your third paragraph, and there is a lot of room for deeper exploration of the role Dimitriadis sees evidence playing when it comes to the development of our contemporary version of the paranoid style. Specifically, what role does he say evidence plays here, and why is that a problem? And to what extent does this use of evidence transform the paranoid style, as Dimitriadis says, from the radical right to a broader application? These questions are left a bit vague in your third paragraph, and even more so in the last paragraph. Keep thinking about who your readers are and how Dimitriadis might help them to reconceptualize this notion of the paranoid style in our own political context? How might these three key parts of Dimitriadis's essay contribute to rethinking Hofstadter along these lines?

Formatted: Line spacing: single

Dr. Hansen

Formatted: Font: (Default) +Body (Calibri)