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Deciphering Dimitriadis

According to Greg 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" (390). 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 references in his article "The Political Paranoid in Contemporary Politics" (390). 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 explain the greater process of becoming a nation of self-contained and overtly suspicious citizens with no regard for community.

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 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 for 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” (391). The convergence of both factual evidence and an imaginary telos is the origin of political paranoia.

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 division between already opposing modalities of thinking. 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” (391). That is, the politically paranoid do not lack evidence, they simply lack evidence that renders multiple perspectives, thus explaining why political paranoia is not sanctioned to one extreme of the political spectrum. In this case, political paranoia is not a convoluted conspiracy making claims without facts, it is rather a symptom of a lack of compromise and shared knowledge. This relates back to the decrepit “public sphere” mentioned before, and the limited arena that hosts necessary conversations integral for educating the community and for deleting the transmission of misguided information and one sided facts.

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 radical schools of thought. Harboring an eliminationist perspective promotes the further division between the basal differences of political opinion ultimately giving rise to an increase in politically paranoid individuals. This is why the lack of communication in our country in recent years has birthed surmounting suspiciousness. The tension necessary to cause an overwhelming suspicion does not arise out of thin air, but is seen rather when competing evidence is presented to a community not open to discussing ideas contrasting to their own opinions, which sequentially eliminates the public sphere entirely. The absence of communication is the initiative required for disqualifying the potential for compromise, thus resulting in two radically different and equally passionate groups of thinkers. Distrust stems from the inability to consider different viewpoints, and when this distrust renders itself in a national setting, such as a political arena, political paranoia is on full display.

Works Cited

Dimitradis, Greg. "The Political Paranoid in Contemporary Politics." *Cultural Studies/ Critical Methodologies*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2011, pp. 390-391. Academic Search Complete, DOI: 10.1177/1532708611414671.