Depathologized Conspiracy Theories and Cynical Reason: Discursive Positions and Phantasmatic Structures

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Summary

Publicly, conspiracy theories are considered a bizarre mode of thought. In the academic discourse, they are unserious statements positioned between bad imitation of scientific theory and political pathology. Therefore, their authors and consumers experience a procedure of exclusion from the community of "serious people". But there are situations in which conspiracy theories are taken seriously, and established precisely as an exclusion device. These situations are predominantly interpreted as collective endangerment or political crisis. In that case, conspiracy theories stem from the center of political power as legitimate interpretation of reality. This was realized in an extreme way in the Nazi regime. So, the present academic discourse produces the Other by reason of standing for conspiracy theories. In political crisis and authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, the Other is produced by conspiracy theories. Historically, the academic attitude is partly produced by the consequences of the other attitude, through triple "demystification" of the conspiracy panic of Nazism/Fascism, Stalinism and, in the West, McCarthyism. But, structurally, it is the attitude of conspiracy-theory panic, or mimicry in exclusion. We propose a different approach, one that will simultaneously avoid acceptance of conspiracy theories as "facts" and their reduction to a phenomenon of mass hysteria. They should be considered beyond the opposition between delusion and hidden truth. Therefore, we define them as an interpretation pattern, structured as a double phantasm with the possibility of being traversed. This definition is close to Sloterdijk's conception of Cynical Reason, according to which we can differentiate between cynical and kynical conspiracy theories. Cynical conspiracy theories speak in the name of totalitarian and authoritarian power trying to defend an organismic community, and preserve a phantasmatic structure. Kynical conspiracy theories are speaking from the position of particular, fragmentational and singular agents. From the periphery of discourse, they

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criticize the power elite by indicating the cleavages that are concealed by cyn-
ics. In that way, kynical conspiracy theories perform a positive function as a
way of "exposing the dirty linen" of the political regime.

Keywords: conspiracy theory, cynical reason, cynicism, kynicism, psychoana-
lysis, double phantasm

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, to depathologize conspiracy theory (fur-
ther in the text: "CT"), and second, to place it, as a valuable scientific concept, into
the context of the theory of cynical reason and psychoanalysis. According to this
argumentation, CTs are a sort of symptomal reading of reality wherein it is assumed
that, under the influence of the undeclared (hidden) interest (in domination, exploi-
tation, etc.), there is a gap between the "official", public meaning of some interpreta-
tion and its "actual" intention, where there is a tension between the explicitly enun-
ciated content of the text and its pragmatic presuppositions (Žižek, 1994: 10). Also,
CTs are much more present in the political discourse than it is usually assumed, and
the holders of conspiratorial thinking are subjects from various domains of power
(ranging from prominent politicians of the central state to newspaper satirists). Fur-
thermore, the political potentials of CTs are not merely authoritarian. Part of them
could function as a way of "exposing the dirty linen "of the political regime.

Let's start with the analysis of something that used to be called the "common
wisdom" or the point of pathologization of CTs.

(1) Publicly, CTs are considered a bizarre mode of thought or obscure gestures.
In the academic discourse, they are perceived as unserious statements positioned
between bad imitation of scientific theory and political pathology. Therefore, their
authors and consumers experience an exclusion procedure from the community of
"serious people". So, labelling them as "conspiracy theorists" is a form of disquali-
fication and stigmatization, a manner of calling someone a crackpot for his/her
holding of illegitimate knowledge (Bratich, 2008: 3-5).

This line of thinking, claiming that "there is something wrong about CTs!", is
usually associated with Karl Popper (2003) and his consideration of CTs as secular-
ized religious superstition. For him, CTs are similar to Homer's theory of society,
according to which whatever is happening on the fields of Troy is only a reflec-
tion of conspiracies on Mount Olympus. In the place of the gods, CTs only install
powerful and malicious groups responsible for critical social events such as wars,
famine, unemployment, political crisis, etc. According to Popper, there is not much
truth in CTs. Only few conspiracies are fully consumed or accomplished. So, as an
explanation of a social phenomenon, CT overlooks the fact that nothing happens as
it was planned. There have always been unintended consequences of social activi-
ties, and that is exactly what the main goal of social theory is: to explain unintended

consequences of human actions, especially in the functioning of institutions and social collectivities. For this reason, Popper considers CTs as flawed theories in the epistemic sense.

A more radical step in the identification of CTs with unreason starts with Harold Lasswell, Franz Neumann and Richard Hofstadter. They frame CTs in terms of pathological paranoid thinking, inherent to political extremism, authoritarianism and populism.

Lasswell established the conceptual context for paranoid thinking as a political problem of antidemocratic behaviour, by linking political agitation with exaggerated mistrust in public affairs, which, according to him, must be prevented by experts. Those experts are supposed to be a sort of social watchdogs, scientists and researchers "intimately allied to general medicine, psychopathology, physiological psychology and related disciplines" (Lasswell in: Bratich, 2008) with the task of cultivating proper, reasonable or normalized political subjects and discouraging antidemocratic personality types.

Referring to World War II and the Nuclear War threat, he wrote:

All mankind might be destroyed by a single paranoid in a position of power who could imagine no grander exit than using the globe as a gigantic funeral pyre. And the paranoid need not be the leader of a great state. He can be the head of a small state or even of a small gang.

Even a modicum of security under present-day conditions calls for the discovery, neutralization and eventual prevention of the paranoid. (*ibid.*: 184)

What is interesting here is the paranoid nature of these lines themselves!

Franz Neumann is another contributor to the pathologization of conspiratorial thinking. In his seminal work "Fear and Politics" (1957), he perceives the belief in CTs as a consequence of alienation. To be more precise, as a consequence of alienation on three levels: psychological, social and political. The first level is a consequence of universal social repression of libidinous drives (well-known as the "repressive hypothesis"), manifested as ego alienation from drives. The second is the product of industrial society – alienation from work – produced by a monotonous, stultifying job and by values of the bourgeois society, which makes the middle class in particular prone to caesarism or regressive identification with authoritarian political leaders, regression to a horde and loss of the ego. The competitive market situation increases the fear from status degradation and paranoid ideas that are exemplified by CTs of authoritarian leaders. In this social constellation, CT transforms real fear into neurotic fear which is restrained by identification with the leader-demagogue and his clique. These affective tendencies gradually disable the citizens from independent thinking and active civic participation, and foster politi-

cal alienation or rejection of the whole political system that leads to political apathy. This paves the way for the caesaristic movement which despises the rules and institutionalizes the fear.

American historian Richard Hofstadter relied on these previous ideas. His classic essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" (1965) describes his understanding of CTs as the products of (not clinical but) political paranoia. He describes belief in CTs as a *paranoid style* of thought "simply because no other word adequately evokes the qualities of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind" (*ibid.*: 3). It is a worldview and a way of self-expression in which the central role is played by a sense of persecution, systematized in grandiose CTs about historical events and processes. For him, style is the most important feature here, "the way in which ideas are believed and advocated, rather than... the truth or falsity of their content" (*ibid.*: 5), since "any system of beliefs can be espoused in the paranoid style". As the most rationalistic derangement, paranoia is very close to reason.[1] So, paranoid style and normal political reasoning differ not in "the absence of facts, but (in) the leap of the imagination" (*ibid.*: 37). It is an "exaggeration of the ordinary", which threatens to become unreasonable mainstream (Bratich, 2008: 38).[2] For Hofstadter, this paranoid style is peculiar to Fascism, Stalinism, "frustrated nationalisms", populist movements and political extremists which do not support the pluralistic consensus of liberal society.

This specific conceptual suture of irrationality and dangerous political activity has become the official attitude of the liberal state. It is very often used for pathologization of political dissent (Bratich, 2008: 31) and consequently for exclusion. So, due to this exclusionary approach, one cannot hope to be taken seriously if one believes in CTs.

Nevertheless, CTs are not merely a marginalized and obscure form of thinking, the function of which is only to establish contours of normality. There are situations in which CTs are taken seriously, and are no longer established as a reason for exclusion, but precisely as an exclusion device: as the mode of interpretation for defining the enemy. These situations are dominantly interpreted as collective endangerment or political crisis. In that case, CTs stem from the centre of political power as a legitimate interpretation of reality. Here, the following are invoked by enunciation of CTs: state of emergency, defensive consensus, and suspension of democratic rules and values (if there are any). In the name of protection of state, order, community or "our way of life", the line of exclusion is drawn by CTs. The well-known

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[1] Daniel Pipes would say that it is the "secret vice of the rational mind" (1997: 34).

[2] Lipset and Raab (1970) would say: "The same values and moral commitments that have been the constant strength of our democratic life (individualism, antistatism, egalitarianism)... provide the substance of extremist threats to that democratic life" (p. 30 in: Bratich, 2008: 39).

theories about internal and external enemies fall within this category. According to Salecl (2002: 52), this is the situation where the usual distinction between ideological discourse and allusion disappears. Here we have a direct and open statement about the enemy, the existence of which can only be alluded to in regular ideological discourse. No ideological mask is present here any more. This was realized in an extreme manner in the Nazi regime. After having gained power, Hitler tried to defeat the alleged conspiracy of the Elders of Zion by his own (and his fellows') counter-conspiracy. There are numerous historical examples of a similar function of CTs in the communist, but also in the so-called democratic world (recall the "Red Scare", the theory of Saddam's weaponry of mass destruction, or Tudjman's theory of "black, yellow and green devils").

Let us resume! The present academic discourse produces the Other by denoting as such those who advocate CTs. But, in times of political crisis and authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, the Other is produced by CTs. Historically, the academic attitude is partly produced by the consequences of the other attitude, mostly through triple "demystification" of the *conspiracy panic*[3] of Nazism/Fascism, Stalinism and, in the West, McCarthyism, repeated and exemplified during the 1990s (and the present decade) in the US as a way of labelling domestic and international terrorism. But, structurally, the academic attitude is also a form of conspiracy-theory panic, or mimicry in exclusion, guided by the will for moderation.

The outcome of this exclusion of CTs from the "community of serious statements" is the attitude that they "should be neither believed in nor investigated" (Pigden, 2007: 219). For Charles Pigden, this attitude became conventional wisdom (*ibid*.), but a very dangerous one in terms of democratic culture and various intellectual disciplines. On the contrary, in his opinion "we are rationally entitled to believe in conspiracy theories if that is what the evidence suggests. Some conspiracy theories are sensible and some are silly, but if they are silly this is not because they are conspiracy theories but because they suffer from some specific defect – for instance, that the conspiracies they postulate are impossible or far-fetched" (*ibid*.). Belief in CTs is often a rational option and every historically or politically literate person is to a great extent a conspiracy theorist, even though many intellectuals and political commentators are not aware of this fact. If one believes in sources of public information (media, institutions, historical texts, etc.), a great deal of what they present to us is not possible to explain outside of the conspiratorial interpretation framework. Also, there are so many CTs that are accepted as unproblematic and legitimate knowledge. For example, whatever we might think about 9/11, it is rational to believe that this

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[3] I borrow this term from Bratich (2008: 8). It designates a form of moral panic, or a way of defining a minority group as folk devils, "a condition, episode, person or group of persons [who] become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (Cohen, 1972: 9).

event is the result of conspiracy. Otherwise, we should assume that the perpetrators have been assembled by accident, with a sudden idea to hijack the planes and crash them into the Twins, the White House, and the Pentagon. But this is not even considered as a credible CT. Moreover, history abounds in coups, assassinations, mass murders, etc. that are inconceivable outside of the conspiratorial framework. (Had the plans of Brutus and Cassius, or of the "Black Hand" been public, Caesar could have avoided the Senate House, and Franz Ferdinand Sarajevo, or arrested the potential murderers. Holocaust and Stalin purges are the most pronounced examples of mass killings planned and partly executed in secret [*ibid*.: 223].) Conspiracies are common even at the everyday level of democratic politics, for example: in leadership challenge, or in bribery, corruption, etc. So, people are prone to conspire.

Therefore, consistent acceptance of conventional wisdom might lead us into an absurd situation, and render many parts of history unbelievable and unknowable, along with being politically extremely dangerous. If we did not believe in CTs, then "we would not even be allowed to investigate these questions, since any answer we came up with would be something we were not entitled to believe" (*ibid*.: 225). In the interpretation of current events:

> We could believe in the dead bodies but not that anyone had conspired to kill them; believe in the missing money, but not in the felonious theft. And it would be a political disaster, since it would confer immunity on political criminals of all sorts, from the perpetrators of genocide down to bribe-taking congressmen. We could not punish people for crimes that we were not entitled to believe in or investigate. (*ibid*.: 226)

In that case, the principle that the *price of freedom is constant vigilance* would be a meaningless phrase. We would be officially blind to most serious threats to the democratic order.

This critique has initiated the debate about CTs as knowledge.

The main questions were: Is it possible to establish the criteria for differentiation between epistemically unwarranted and warranted CTs? How to differentiate the flawed features of some CT as such from conspiracy theorists' epistemic errors? Is it correct to apply the criterion of falsifiability to CTs? Is the conspiracy theorists' suspicion against mechanisms of public production of information reasonable? Finally, is it possible to determine or to estimate the level of conspirativity of a society?

There is not enough space here to reconstruct this debate, but the main conclusions were:

– it is very hard to establish the criteria for the determination of unwarranted CTs as such without confusing them with conspiracy theorists' tendencies, e.g. fetishist relationship to errant data;

- the criterion of falsifiability is not applicable to CTs, because the subjects of investigation are not passive. Moreover, it is reasonable to presume active involvement of investigated protagonists in the obstruction or redirection of the investigation, as in the cases of Watergate or the Iran-Contra affair;

- conspiracy theorists are not radical sceptics. Their basic premises are much more interesting. The first premise is that we have little reason to claim positive warrant for our confidence in public institutions of information where critical interests of the dominant powers are at stake; second, a substantial positive warrant exists to believe that public institutions of information are routinely used to deceive us in the service of these interests. For these authors, conspiracy theorists are right when they claim that in today's society there is an unavoidable and serious prior probability of active conspiracy (Basham, 2003: 94-95);

- but there is no correct answer to the question: "How conspiratorial is our society?" We are left having only to assume the answer, because we do not know if the basic, so-called "observationally given" public information is filtered and fabricated or largely accurate.[4] Apart from that, we will never know anything about the unrevealed successful conspiracies.

For these reasons, participants in this debate suggest that – instead of simply accepting or rejecting CTs – we need to be equally sceptical towards them as towards other theories, wherever we notice internal flaws, such as self-inconsistency, interpretational gaps, appealing to unlikely or apparently unconvincing motives and other unrealistic psychological states, technologically obsolete statements and discrepancies between theory and facts, etc. Accordingly, some authors advocate the "golden mean between naivety and paranoia"[5] or "studied agnosticism",[6] meaning that every inclination for or against some CT should bear a disclaimer warning that it is a "tentative belief based on interpretation of the assembled evidence".

So, in principle, we can never be sure about the truth of CTs, and for every particular CT we can leave this question of truth to investigative journalism, police and the courts.

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[4] The reliability and stability of records depends mainly on the larger question of the level of conspiratorial activity in the surrounding institutions. This point is all the more pressing in the digital age, in which many records take the form of highly malleable digital encodings (Basham, 2003: 102-103).

[5] Steve Clarke in: Coady, 2006: 126.

[6] Lee Basham in: Coady, 2006: 72.

(2) I propose a different approach, one that will simultaneously avoid acceptance of CTs as "facts" and their mere reduction to a phenomenon of mass hysteria (Žižek, 1999: 6). CTs should be considered beyond the opposition between delusion and hidden truth. Therefore, I define them simply as theories that posit conspiracies (Pigden, 2007: 226).[7] They are more or less popular interpretations of politics regardless of their conclusiveness. Their primary function is to determine the frontline friend/enemy and they should, therefore, be studied as a manifestation of political cleavages.

First, I will examine their structure, and after that, their political function.

My thesis is that we can explain their structure using the tools of Lacanian psychoanalysis, particularly the theory of double phantasm (Salecl, 2002: 31; Žižek, 1996: 87; Stavrakakis, 1999).

Psychoanalytical Understanding of Conspiracy Theory

The core of CT is the image of a group of enemies or some collective enemy entity. By means of this construction, people try to avoid and reshape in an imaginary and symbolical manner the trauma caused by the experience of the elusive, terrifying, and traumatic properties of the Other. From the point of view of Lacanian psychoanalysis' conception of three orders of experience – Simbolic, Imaginary and Real, CTs derive from the (imaginary) Real, from the experience of the Real in the Other, from the unfathomable gap of radical Otherness. This alien traumatic core as an inert, inaccessible, and enigmatic property of the Other raises the question *Che vuoi?*,[8] e.g. when communicating with the Other, "You're telling me that, but what do you want with it, what are you aiming at" (Žižek, 2002: 155), what are your real intentions which differ from the literal ones, in other words "what is [that] in the subject more than the subject?" (*ibid.*: 158), what is the indefinable, the thing which resists interpellation and positioning in a symbolic network? It is what Lacanian psychoanalysis denotes as *objet petit a*, and defines as the object-cause of enjoyment.

What does the Other want? As an answer to this question expressing the "unbearable enigma of the Other's desire", we get phantasm$_2$, an imaginary scenario, i.e. an unsettling explanation as to why something went wrong, for instance "why

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[7] CTs are an interpretative framework which defines political events and wider political processes as a consequence of premeditated and deceptively random activities, i.e. secret agreements regarding the performance of illegal and immoral activities (and objectives), or their application in accomplishing illegal objectives.

[8] Literally translated from Italian, it means: *What do you want?* See how it is elaborated in Lacan's graph of desire (1983: 291-295) and by Žižek (2002: 155-168), who claims that it is a widespread phenomenon in politics since every political request is caught up in the dialectic which always implies something different from its literal meaning.

is our society not functioning", "who is to blame for our pauperization", "who is exploiting us" – and, in the long run, "who is stealing our enjoyment". "In the case of anti-Semitism, the answer to 'What does the Jew want?' is a fantasy of 'Jewish conspiracy': a mysterious power of Jews to manipulate events, to pull the strings behind the scenes" (*ibid.*: 160). This image of the enemy is the pre-ideological core of ideology containing the spectral phantasm which fills the void in the Real while functioning as defence from "Che vuoi?" and, at the same time, as the framework which coordinates our desire, or the "formal matrix, on which are grafted various ideological formations" (Žižek, 1994: 13). In the sense of the latter, a CT also possesses a symbolic dimension which manifests itself through a series of signifiers, specific of the ideological context within which they manifest themselves, most usually in the form of more or less elaborated narratives.

The main function of the Symbolic order, in the framework of which CTs take form, is to make co-existence with others at least bearable by imposing laws and obligations, i.e. to act as a kind of attenuator and consideration generator. It manifests itself as the third element which, while it is functional, prevents the relationship "between me and my neighbours so that our relations do not explode in murderous violence" (Žižek, 2006: 46). Therefore, as long as the Symbolic order is functional, CTs remain a local phenomenon which reflects the dynamics of the interrelation between various agents and the modalities of coping with different problems. If the symbolic network is narrowed down, and its constituents are suspended, for instance in the context of social anomy or collapse of a certain order, the black--and-white description technique provided by CTs becomes more prominent. Within such a context, a single moment of its temporary complete suspension is enough to induce violence, conflict, or war.

Nevertheless, in order to enable a relatively successful functioning of the symbolic order, it has to be supported by the phantasm of its functional completeness. It is a phantasm which accompanies the spectral phantasm of CTs. In other words, we can talk about two types of phantasms. One is the idealistic construction of society or community, whereas the other is the unsettling explanation as to why something (or everything) "went wrong". These two phantasms – used to express the aforementioned dichotomy – are closely interrelated. Under certain circumstances, on the level of an individual subject and a certain discourse, these two phantasms may become mutually interchangeable as to which shall dominate and which shall be subordinate. A more dominant first phantasm shall imply a higher level of identification with the symbolic order, and thus more pronounced confidence in official authorities and structures, a situation which corresponds to the context of a relatively "peaceful" reproduction of the existing order, wherein disturbing factors are easy to neutralize or present as exceptions to the rule. The situation in which a more pro-

nounced dislocation of the Symbolic order, due to some Real antagonism, causes the first concept to lose its functionality, leads to the explanation and, quite often, identification of the agent responsible for the problems who has the role of "thief of enjoyment" (Salecl, 2002). Quite often, these social agents may be various ethnic, linguistic, or racial minority groups, civil associations and organizations, but also political and other elites within the community which perceives itself as being threatened, or outside of it. In this situation, the dominant position is taken over by the unsettling aspect of the phantasm which leads to distancing from and distrust of the designated culprits, accompanied by the request for their neutralisation and/or removal.

Such an interpretation of the subject split between the phantasms is close to Sloterdijk's (1992) definition of the cynical reason as a universal and diffuse phenomenon of the present. According to this author, the cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he nonetheless still insists upon the mask. Translated into the language of the previous psychoanalytical explanation, this means that, on the level of everyday experience, in the course of reception and interpretation of politically relevant events, the subject experiences a gap between the ideological meaning of discourse, i.e. the formal vocabulary used to publicly describe the event in the framework of the "stable and well-functioning" system (phantasm$_1$), and premonition in the sense of decoding the "actual" meaning of this event on the level of political games of particular interest of the actual participants in a wider temporal perspective (phantasm$_2$). In this process, phantasm$_2$ quite often acquires the form of CT. In order to become clearly articulated and expressed, it requires an acute experience of personal and/or collective instrumentalization and/or threat, and an available or conceivable culprit. In that situation, the actual opinion (or, rather, what the critical mass suspects to be true) is expressed in order to go through a "purification ritual" and establish the old or new ideological discourse, i.e. remain in the framework of double phantasms.

Sloterdijk also differentiates cynicism from kynicism, two terms which have in common the "motive of self-preservation in times of crisis", cheekiness, "releasing the breaks" and "blurting things which are not for the public" (*ibid*.: 118), i.e. "a kind of shameless, 'dirty' realism" (*ibid*.: 197). Nevertheless, they are the expression of different positions of power. Sloterdijk associates cynicism with the Master's culture and "refinement", whereas kynicism is associated with the popular, plebeian thought, i.e. opposition to official ideology which is expressed in the most plastic manner through satirical subversion. In doing so, kynicism acts as "a resoluteness not to let the naked truth that hides behind cultural disguises to elude it" (*ibid*.: 158). Cynicism, on the other hand, tries to reduce everything "higher" to the lowest denominator, and represents "the masters' antithesis to their own idealism as ideology and as masquerade" (*ibid*.: 118). Since, in history, it appeared after kyni-

cism, cynicism may be defined as kynicism that passed over to the side of power and idealism of the governing ideology, and became its shadow, i.e. its dark side. Therefore, depending on whether they are critically oriented towards the governing structures and dominant ideology or they support them, we may differentiate between kynical and cynical CTs.

Hypothetical Conclusion

1. According to the previous analysis of cynicism and kynicism, cynical CTs would support the integration and homogenization of the community, as well as the totalitarian and authoritarian power. They are communicated from the position of unity towards a potentially dangerous and unacceptable particularity. These are theories which speak from the position of (or on behalf of) the centre of political power, and strive to protect a monolithically conceived system and a certain form of organically conceived community. This is not an instance of non-reflexive dogmatism, as it may look like at first sight, but rather a way of functioning of cynicism in conditions that are perceived as a crisis. Cynicism usually functions according to the formula "They know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it", which means that it is manifested as hypocrisy in the interpretation of political events – by means of declarative acceptance of public interpretations and guessing the "true" motives and goals of the protagonists, which is a fertile ground for interpretation through CTs. It is a backside of the public façade which Žižek identifies with the distancing from the public law and its derision from the position of the obscene internal side, structured by phantasms, which is manifested through the imagining of conspiracies against their own object of enjoyment. When the situation is perceived as dangerous, or is just represented that way, CTs start cropping up among the public, regardless of whether it is an instance of a political group (such as a party or coalition) which is trying to preserve or regain its own position of power and/or implement a certain more or less hegemonic project, or of bitter and distrustful citizens. In all these instances, public discourse is conceptually reduced in order to protect in the most efficient possible manner the imaginary source of pleasure, which is actually the "Common Thing", represented as a live organism.

2. Unlike previous theories, kynical theories speak from the position of particular, fragmentational and singular agents. They criticise the (governing) power elite from the periphery of the political discourse, pointing at cleavages which the cynics tacitly ignore, except when they feel endangered. Through kynical CTs could be expressed the criticism of the Government or dominant political agents in the activities of which CTs find tendencies of deliberate restriction of freedoms and rights, usurpation of power and illegitimacy of its operation, manipulation, corruption, betrayal of trust, etc.

Although they may be embittered by political events, the behaviour of the elite and the functioning of the order to the same extent as the cynics, they differ from them at least by partially abandoning the phantasmatic framework. In this sense, they either identify with the inability to establish a community as a harmonious whole and with the inability to establish a democratic order based on a permanently occupied position of power – and thus either deride these attempts or denounce them as dangerous political acts – or they sublimate their previous identification with the Common Thing into an Ego-ideal expressed through some kind of democratic ideology from which they later on criticise the behaviour of the bearers of political power. In that way, kynical CTs perform a positive function as a way of "exposing the dirty linen" of the political regime.[9]

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[9] On whether I am right in the case of Croatian CTs, see another, already published article (Blanuša, 2010).

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DEPATOLOGIZACIJA TEORIJA ZAVJERA I CINIČNI UM:
DISKURZIVNE POZICIJE I FANTAZMATSKE STRUKTURE

Sažetak

Teorije zavjera obično se drže bizarnim oblikom mišljenja. Akademski diskurs smatra ih neozbiljnim iskazima i pozicionira ih u prostoru između loše imitacije znanstvene teorije i političke patologije. Stoga nad njihovim autorima i konzumentima provodi proceduru isključivanja iz zajednice "ozbiljnih ljudi". No ima situacija u kojima teorije zavjera bivaju shvaćene ozbiljno i tada se uspostavljaju kao samo sredstvo isključivanja. Ove su situacije dominantno interpretirane kao kolektivne ugroze ili političke krize. U tom slučaju teorije zavjera dolaze iz središta političke moći kao legitimne interpretacije zbilje. Ovakva je situacija u ekstremnom smislu realizirana u nacističkom režimu. Dakle, sadašnji akademski diskurs proizvodi Drugog *zbog* zastupanja teorija zavjere. No u političkim krizama, autoritarnim i totalitarnim režimima Drugi se proizvodi *putem* teorija zavjera. Povijesno gledano, akademski je stav dijelom proizvod posljedica drugog stava, putem trostruke "demistifikacije" konspirativne panike nacizma/fašizma, staljinizma i, na Zapadu, makartizma. Međutim, strukturalno gledajući ovaj je stav panika o teorijama zavjera ili mimikrija prethodnog oblika panike u pogledu isključivosti. Autor predlaže drukčiji pristup koji istovremeno izbjegava prihvaćanje teorija zavjera kao činjenica, ali i njihovo reduciranje na fenomen masovne histerije. Teorije zavjera analizira onkraj opreke deluzije i skrivene istine. Stoga teorije zavjera definira kao obrazac interpretacije, strukturiran kao dvostruka fantazma s mogućnošću njegova "presijecanja". Ovakva je definicija bliska Sloterdijkovoj koncepciji ciničnog uma, sukladno kojoj je moguće razlikovati cinične i kinične teorije zavjera. Cinične teorije zavjera govore u ime totalitarne i autoritarne vlasti u obranu organizmički zamišljene zajednice i zadržavaju strukturu

dvostruke fantazme. Kinične teorije zavjera govore iz pozicije partikularnih, fragmentacijskih i singularnih aktera. S periferije diskursa one kritiziraju elite moći ukazujući na rascjepe koje cinici prešućuju. Na taj način kinične teorije zavjera imaju pozitivnu funkciju kao način razotkrivanja "prljavog rublja" političkog režima.

Ključne riječi: teorija zavjere, cinični um, cinizam, kinizam, psihoanaliza, dvostruka fantazma

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