

Abstract

The numerous and varied conspiracy theories which circulate in the contemporary discourse are subject to hyperstition, insofar as they are grouped into wider, more elaborate structures. Some of them become hierarchic to such a degree, that they may, in Michael Barkun's typology, be labeled as "superconspiracy" constructs. No author is more prolific and systematic in the crafting of these constructs than the guru of anglophone conspiracy theory belief, David Icke. The work attempts to keep as its object of study the work of David Icke and his "reptoid hypothesis," as it is effectively one of the most elaborate and baroque conspiracy theories which populate contemporary political discourse. It is Icke's oeuvre which this thesis attempts to recontextualize within the confines of critical social theory and Žižekian psychoanalysis.

The existence of a "paranoid style" as professed by Richard J. Hofstadter can be noted throughout the history of western culture, from the Homeric gods, scheming behind the scenes, to its modern incarnations culminating in the superconspiracy constructs of David Icke, Alex Jones, and others. The work focuses not on specific conspiracy theories and their claim to facticity, but rather attempts to trace the structural features of Icke's construct and establish their underlying logic based around, predominantly Marxian, dialectics. These include the opposition of oppressor vs. the oppressed as manifest in class struggle, the critique of capitalist homogeneity, or the alienation of the worker from his/her product of labor. It will be shown that Icke professes not only a type of vulgar Marxism, but further places his narrative within a mythical mode, making frequent use of mystical, transcendental New Age discourses.

The thesis charts a path of analysis through the tradition of critical theory towards a psychoanalytic, predominantly Lacanian/Žižekian, analysis which attempts to unravel the relationship between the subject and the Other, which lies at the very core of conspiracy theory belief. The concept of the big Other plays a central role in the forming and propagation of conspiracy theories. In fact, it is always the Other that Icke's superconspiracy construct is geared towards and grapples with. The thesis attempts to show that, through a type of Žižekian reversal, the modern, turn-of-the-century conspiracy theory belief is, in fact, not an attempt at an escape from the Other's Law, but rather a perverse attempt to reinstate it. The characteristic of 'hypercompetence' placed onto the Other (in Icke's case, the reptilian Annunaki overlords) is an attempt to reclaim a fixed order of things. The hierarchy on which Icke's conspiracy belief is based betrays an attempt to move away from the multi-agent, black box mechanics of much of today's social, economic, and psychological processes towards a wholly transparent, readily readable system. It is in this way that Icke creates a functional myth, which attempts to fill the void left in the western semiotic field in the wake of post-structuralist theories of language and textuality. The advent of the internet was not only a type of catalyst for this attempt to get readable answers, but also became the tool for the promulgation of these highly idiosyncratic narratives.

The thesis makes use of the works of 20th century thinkers, most notably Jacques Lacan, Herbert Marcuse, Michel Foucault, Slavoj Žižek, Nick Land and of numerous theorists of conspiracy theory, such as Michael Barkun, Richard J. Hofstadter, and Karl Popper.