Review of: "Re-calling Magical Thinking: Different, yet Connected Views on Magical Thinking"

Daniel Rueda Garrido

The article "Re-calling magical thinking" is a pleasant and interesting read. In general, it proposes, from the perspective of cultural anthropology, a revision of the concept of magical thinking outside the evolutionary pattern (ethnographic and cognitive) that has characterised it as a lower stage of either the intellectual development of the child or the development of society. Particularly interesting is the idea that, contrary to Piaget's first approach, magical thinking never disappears, going beyond the child's intellectual maturity (12 years), so there would be no evolutionary progression.

However, the ideas are not supported by sufficient evidence, and a deeper analysis is lacking. Their conclusion is that magical thinking has beneficial effects in modern life and that it is actually not a wrong way of thinking, but a pervasive way of making sense of life. This is not well articulated or evidenced, although some references are given to support it.

Finally, the author should revise the conclusion, as it goes beyond the standard function. It takes the COVID-19 pandemic as more than a mere example and makes it a substantive issue in its own right. Perhaps an attempt could be made to insert this topic within the main text, as it seems to be a real objective of the article, i.e., the discussion of social behaviour during the pandemic. If this were to be done, I would also recommend that this change be reflected in the title. COVID-19 would be the object of the study from the theoretical framework of magical thinking. As I say, this would require more evidence and a greater number of sources, also in relation to COVID-19. I also note that in the conclusion, the first person approach is used. I am not sure that this is the usual way to proceed for an academic article, although it would be fine for a blog or merely as a draft of a subsequent academic article.

I would recommend that the author revises his English sentences; some are repetitive, others do not seem grammatically correct. For example, "Nemeroff and Rozin presented two main components of magical thinking by which they defined magical thinking." Perhaps one could say, "Nemeroff and Rozin defined magical thinking in terms of two main components." There are also repetitions in the introduction to Frazer's distinction between homeopathic magic and contagious magic.

To conclude, studying social behaviour during the Covid-19 pandemic from the perspective of magical thinking can be fruitful, especially considering how scientific thinking, as marginal thinking, was absent because of the scientific community's own contradictions. Would it have been different if there had been a coordinated and unequivocal response to the pandemic from political and scientific institutions? Is magical thinking subsidiary to the absence of scientific thinking that sets the guidelines for our behaviour? Would magical thinking end in a technocratic and totalitarian society driven by algorithms that would tell us the best way to proceed based on the available scientific data?