

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

Claudio Lucchiari¹

¹ University of Milan

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This short and interesting paper brings back into the spotlight the fact that magical thinking, often described as peculiar to children or primitive societies, is actually a way of thinking typical of every human being and every society. After all, it could not be otherwise. Everything that has been discovered by science comes from primarily intuitive processes, which, once subjected to conscious criticism and in the presence of a (scientific) method of proof, leads over time to the development of a body of knowledge no longer based on mere intuition, but on evidence. Without magical thinking, the development of science could be based only on what is observable, but the relationships between phenomena are almost never observable, and so here are the temporal or pseudo-causal links that can act as intuitive engines, capable of starting the process that, if well guided by knowledge, reflection, and method, leads toward scientific knowledge. The text is well written, organized, and argued, although the citations are often dated and there is a lack of references to recent studies, especially from a Covid-19 perspective. Moreover, I think the distinction between magical thinking as a cognitive process and magical thinking as a social process is not well clarified. Although the two are interdependent, they have different origins and characteristics. Moreover, the social process can be consciously guided to feed into the cognitive process, so that the individual appropriates knowledge that is widespread in his or her cultural context and believes it from inherently cognitive processes. In general, I do not believe that during the Covid-19 pandemic, magical thinking was leveraged to cope with anxiety, but rather a culture of fear and guilt was used to increase anxiety and, through the emotions, produce "automatic" behaviors not necessarily subject to reflection. In conclusion, I believe the article provides many elements for thought on the psychological, social, and cultural levels of human functioning. It is also useful in interpreting recent events and thinking to future challenges ahead.