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**Magical Thinking and Action in the Contemporary Urban Society**

**Summary**

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**Keywords:** magic, magical thinking, society, social representations, superstitions

## Summary

Magic has been the subject of many scientific research over the time, in fields as ethnology, anthropology, sociology, psychology. Still, there are few materials that treat the subject in its complexity and not just from a historical perspective. There are fewer those that have not been contested or criticized by the researchers that followed.

This research aims not to present magic from a historical perspective, but from the perspective of the diverse theories that have been used in interpretation of magic over the time. More important, the study presents what magic is for the contemporary man, in what degree we can speak about magical thinking and action in the contemporary urban society.

The research is based on the central concept of magical thinking and magical acts. From this perspective, we view magic as a specific form of thinking derived from the category psychologists name intuitive and asociative thinking, the thinking based on personal experience. Magical thinking is a specific form of thinking that arises from the general and universal need for order: any individual prefers order and harmony (even if it is an ilusion) instead of chaos. This form of thinking leads to acts, either subconscious reactions, that are not subject of reflection, or conscious ritualistic acts.

From the start, we deny the theory that magical thinking is specific to the „primitive” and to isolated traditional communities. As a leading hypothesis, we declare that magical thinking, in a manifest or latent form, is as present as ever at the contemporary man.

The main objectives of the research refer to analyzing the social representations of magic, analyzing the construction of superstitions, and observing the role some patterns, some stories play in society.

So we start by saying that, on a social and individual level, magical thinking coexists with scientific, logical, rational thinking, without involving the weakness of the latter. Magical thought and act is not inadaptation or madness. They have a psychological value: men „fool” themselves, they obtain some kind of control, and a magical act is a form of adaptation in stressing situations.

Most individuals, knowing or not, turn to forms of magical thinking and turn to magical acts. Specific social and individual circumstances increase the probability of this happening (anomia, anxiety, lack of control, social learning, negative experiences to name a few).

In terms of method, giving the fact that magic is a research subject that agrees with qualitative methods, we can mention documentation, that allowed us to analyze and criticize the theories used to interpret magic over the time in ethnology, anthropology and sociology. In the field we applied semi-structured interviews, the method being doubled by standardized psychological scales (110 questionnaires, adapted forms of the scale of magical ideation, the scale of mysticism, the scale of anomia, the scale of perceptual aberration, the scale of existential anxiety, the scale of locus of control and finally, a multidimensional personality questionnaire).

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