

## *Magical Thinking*

*Are we hard-wired for superstition?*



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## *Would you ...*

*wear your grandpa's sweatshirt?*



## *Would you ...*

*wear a serial killer's sweatshirt?*



## *Would you ...*

*eat organic, grass-fed beef?*



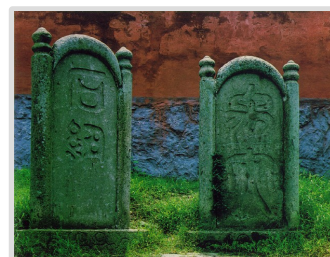
## *Would you ...*

*eat lab-grown meat?*



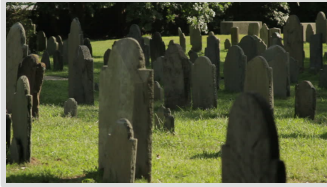
## *Would you ...*

*visit the grave site of a loved one?*



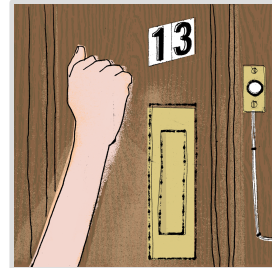
*Would you ...*

*sleep in an old graveyard?*



*Would you ...*

*knock on wood to avoid bad things happening?*



*Would you ...*

*use a Ouija board?*



### *Approaches to magical thinking*

#### **Embrace it:**

- "The world just is full of magic!"

#### **Dismiss it:**

- "It's nonsense, who are you kidding?"

#### **Tolerate it:**

- "It might work for you even if it doesn't work for me."

#### **Try to explain it:**

- "It shows us something about how the mind works."

### *Elements of magical thinking*

#### **Essentialism**

- Certain things have a fixed inner nature that explains what they do.

#### **Words and thoughts have power**

- Language, thoughts and symbols can make stuff happen in the world directly.

#### **Agents are everywhere**

- Disembodied spirits, ghosts, divine minds, etc. are always watching and might do things at any moment.

### *Essentialism*

- Some things have essential, permanent features built-in to them.
- These "essences" determine how things behave, and what their "natural place" in the order of things is and should be.
- It is *wrong* to treat things differently than what their essence demands.



*Is this a side-effect of our capacity to categorize things and form concepts?*

*Words and thoughts have power*

- Words, symbols and thoughts can have a direct influence on events in the real world.
- Words and thoughts can evoke the dead, cause good or bad things to happen, counteract or enhance the effects of other words.
- Symbols and symbolic objects can influence events from a distance.



*Is this a result of our taking literally the power of language and symbolism to suggest and evoke ideas?*

*Agents are everywhere*

- There are hidden beings with minds all over the place.
- Nothing happens by chance and everything happens for a reason.
- Hidden agents create and maintain order, administer justice, help or hinder our plans.



*Is this a side-effect of our hyper-developed social minds, coupled with a bias towards paranoia?*