

**Conceptual tools from  
anthropology for thinking about  
early reactions to Covid-19  
(Seminar)**

Mark Jamieson

May 30<sup>th</sup> 2023

Mark Jamieson will be discussing anthropological approaches to people's initial responses to the COVID pandemic.

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_S5hVz0r1Bo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_S5hVz0r1Bo)

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Good evening everybody for this session of radical anthropology.

We are going to have a talk from my old colleague at University of London, or former colleague when I was at University of East London. This is Mark Jamison, who is still, visibly working away there, sadly not with the anthropology program, but still, waving a flag for anthropology.

He's talking tonight on conceptual tools for thinking about Covid 19 from anthropology. So yeah, please take it away.

Okay. thank you very much, Camilla.

Hello everybody, My name's Mark Jamesons. As Camilla said, this presentation is perhaps less about Covid 19 than it is for how really anthropologists think about the conceptual tools they use. And it's really about, the process what, of relativization, how anthropologists, really, think not only about, the other, but use, their, ruminations about the other to think about, their own cultures and so forth. So, let me, start first slide. yeah, so as I said, anthropology is, not just about, talking, trying to understand how those funny people in those funny places and, do those funny things and why they do those funny things.

The anthropologist anthropology is as much about, denaturalizing and ex exotizing one's own culture.

So it's, really, just, part of doing anthropology is to relativize ourselves and to show, we you look at other cultures, other societies to, other ways of being in the world to, if you like, put up a mirror to ourselves and, show that, our own, our own cultures are, equally exotic, and that what we see there and what we take for granted as being natural a lot of the time is in fact socially and culturally constructed. and since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, anthropology has been, less concerned with, like making sense of, what, what, goes on in other cultures, although that still goes on, but with also, not with, if you're, like, example presenting exotic cultures, but really denaturalizing and de exotizing those other cultures. So it's, it, but as I said, it's also been, concerned with Denaturalizing, the exotic cult ex de exotizing, the cultures, which, most of us probably in this room are most familiar with. And, two of those cultures have, come to be known, in anthropological parlance as the, the Naima, na rema. And, you can see what that is when it's, peled backwards.

It has a sort of like, nice kind of Amazonian feel. But, and the other is the, shme. So I'll be really, talking about, that and holding, the anthropological mirror and using, conceptual tools devised by anthropologists working in other cultures to, try and make

sense of, ourselves. The reason I've chosen, COVID, 19, what I'm interested in is, and I'm not, we're not talk about Covid 19. I'm not really, talking here about, the extent to which Covid 19 was a killer, or whether it was all a big hoax or anything like that. I'm not really, concerned with that at all. I mean I may have particular views on that, I'm sure you have. But, what I'm really interested in is trying to make sense of, the kind of new kinds of, behavior, the new kinds of action and social action, which things like, the pandemic and the lockdowns in the initial stages, brought, to everybody. So, want you to think back to that period a couple of years ago where we were like crossing the road so we didn't get too close to old people.

We were all wearing masks. we were all having to make, cues behind to get into supermarkets that weren't too full and we were very conscious of standing so many yards back, and we got sort of quite, agitated if people came too close and all of those kind of things and we began to think about things like, the causes of Covid 19, did it emerge from, China or, whatever.

So it's really kind of thinking about, the kind of, if you like, a popular understanding of that because it's often in those kind of type of crises, which, you have different kinds of behavior that sometimes, they can shed a light on the kinds of, perhaps irrational, ways in which we act within the world and we think about the world.

So, okay, what I want to do first is I want to, read you a little bit, from a paper that was, published in the American anthropologist in 19, 56 and this was a paper called, body Ritual amongst the Naris NASA Ramma and I think this is where the term Na Rema was first actually coined, and appeared in the art anthropological literature. And what, ho Min was. This was a spoof article. It was a spoof article and what he wanted to do was to show, how, anthropologists when describing other cultures, not only how they could get it a bit wrong, but more important, it showed us, how, we, the, the anthropological tools of analysis can, enable us to ex exoticize our own culture. So, just draw in mind to, two of the terms that appear in it. One is, is [unknown] whatever that is, which if you look, read that backwards, you see that means something, in English. And the other one is Zo as well, which is another term, which you, if you read, that backwards spell it, backwards means something. So this to article's not very long. It's just a, a, a three or four pages.

So I just read it very quickly and then I'll come onto my talk. One.

What I think this, article this spoof article by Miner does, is it, gives you a sense of how, anthropologists use conceptual tools devised, initially for, examining, other cultures, how they use those to bear upon, the study of their own cultures.

Okay, so I'll start now. This article was called Body Ritual amongst, among the Na NASA Rema.

The anthropologists has become so familiar with the diversity of ways in which different people's behave in similar situations.

Lithia is not apt to be surprised by even the most exotic customs. In fact, if all of the logically possible combinations of behavior have not been found somewhere in the world, it's apt to suspect that they must be present in some yet undescribed tribe.

This point has in fact been expressed with ma with respect to Klan organization by Murdoch. In this light, the magical beliefs and practices of the NAMA present such ex, unusual aspects that it seems desirable to describe them as an example of the extremes to which human behavior can go.

Professor Linton first brought to the ritual of the nama to the attention of anthropologists 20 years ago, but the culture of these people is still very poorly understood.

There are a North American group living in the territory between the Canadian free, the Yaki, and, Tarahumara of Mexico and the Carib AAC of the Antis Little is known as their origin. Although, tradition states that they came from the East, according to Nama mythology, their nation was originated by a culture hero. not oh sh sure, who is otherwise known for two great feats of strength, the throwing of a piece of wamp ham across the river, a pat mac, and the chopping down of a cherry tree in which the spirit of truth resided.

Naima culture is characterized by a highly developed market economy, which has evolved in a rich natural habitat.

While much of the people's time is devoted to economic pursuits, a large part of the fruits of the these labors and a considerable portion of the day are spelled spent in ritual activity.

The focus of this activity is the human body, the appearance and health of which loom as a dominant concern.

The ethos of these of the people, well, such a concern is, you, certainly not unusual. It's ceremonial aspects and associated philosophy are unique.

The hu the fundamental belief underlying the whole system appears to be that the human body is ugly, and that its natural tendency is to debility and disease incarcerated.

In such a body, man's only hope is to avert these characteristics through the use the powerful influences of ritual and ceremony. Every household has one, or more shrines devoted to this purpose.

The more powerful individuals in the society have several shrines in their houses. And in fact, the opulence of a house is often referred to in terms of the number of, ritual centers it possesses. Most houses are waffle and dow construction, but the shrine rooms of the more wealthy walled with stone, poorer families imitate the rich by applying pottery plaques to their shrine walls. While each family has at least one such shrine. The rituals associated, with it are not family ceremonies, but a private and secret.

The rights are normally only discussed with children, and then only during the period when they're being initiated into these mysteries. I was able, however, to establish sufficient rap rapport with the natives to examine these shrines and to have the rituals described to me.

The focal point of the shrine is a box of chest, which is built into the wall in this chest are kept many charms and magical potions, without which no native believes he could live.

These preparations are secured from a variety of specialized, practitioners.

The most powerful of these are the medicine men whose assistants must be rewarded with substantial gifts. However, the medicine men do not provide the curative potions for their clients, but decide what the ingredients should be, and then write them down in an ancient and secret language.

This writing is understood only by the medicine men and by the herbalist, who, for another gift provide the required charm.

The charm is not disposed of after to served his purpose, but is placed in the charm box of the household shrine.

As these magical materials are specific for certain ills and the real or imagined maladies of the people, or many, the charm box is usually full to overflowing.

The magical packets are so numerous that people forget what their purposes were and fear to use them again. While the natives are very vague on this point, we can only assume that the idea is retaining all the old magical materials, is that their presence in the charm box before which the body rituals are conducted will in some way protect the worshiper.

Beneath the charm box is a small font ev each day, every member of the family in succession enters the shrine room, bows his head before the charm box, mingles different sorts of holy water in the font, and proceeds with a brief right of ablution.

The holy waters are secured from the water temple of the community, where the priests conduct elaborate ceremonies to make the liquid ritually pure in the hierarchy of magical practitioners. And below the medicine, men in prestige are specialists whose designation is best translated holy mouth Men, the Naima have an almost pathological horror of and fascination with the mouth, the condition of which is believed to have a supernatural influence on all social relationships, where it not for the rituals of the mouth, they believe that their teeth would fall out, their gums bleed, their jaw shrink, their friends desert them, and their lovers reject them.

They also believe a strong relationship exists between oral and characteristics.

For example, there is a ritual ablution of the mouth for children, which is supposed to improve their moral fiber.

The daily body ritual performed by everyone includes a mouth, right, despite the fact that to these people who are so pious about continous, about care of the mouth, this Rio involves a practice which strikes the initiated stranger as revolting.

It was reported to me that the ritual consists of an inserting of a small bundle of hog hairs into the mouth, along with certain magical powders, and then moving the BU bundle in a highly formalized series of gestures.

In addition to the private mouth, right, the people seek out a holy mouth man once or twice a year.

These practitioners have an impressive set of paraphernalia consisting of a variety of ORs, walls, probes, and broads.

The use of these objects in the exorcism of the eagles of the mouth involves almost unbelievable ritual torture of the client.

The holy mouth man opens the client's mouth, and using the above magical mentioned tools enlarges any holes which decay may have created in the teeth. Magical materials are then put into these holes.

If there is no naturally occurring holes in the teeth, the large sections of one or more teeth are gouged out so that the supernatural substance can be applied in the client's view.

The purpose of these administrations is to arrest decay and to, draw friends.

The extremely sacred and traditional character of the right is evident in the fact that the natives return to the holy mouth men year after year, despite the fact that their teeth continue to decay.

It's to be hoped that when a thorough study of the NAMA is made, there will be careful inquiry into the personality structure of these people.

One has to watch the gleam in the eye of the holy mouth man as he jabs an all into the exposed nerve to suspect that a certain amount of sadism is involved.

If this can be established, a very interesting pattern emerges, but most of the populations show definite masochistic tendencies.

It was to these that Professor Linton referred in discussing a distinctive part of the daily body rituals, which is perfor, of a daily bodily body ritual, which is performed only by men.

This part of the right involves scraping and lacerating the surface of the face For the sharp instrument, special women's writer performed only four times a year during each lunar month, but what they lack in frequency, they make up in barbarity as part of the ceremony.

Women bake their heads in small ovens for about an hour.

The theoretically interesting point is that what seems to be a preponderantly masochistic, people have developed sadistic specialists.

The medicine men have an imposing temple or lapso in every community of any size.

The more elaborate ceremonies required to treat very sick patients can only be performed at this temple. These ceremonies involve not only, alma tur, but a permanent group of vest, maintenance who move sedate about the temple chambers in distinctive costumes and headdress. The the, the lat, though, ceremonies are so harsh that this phenomenal, that a fair proportion of the really sick natives who enter the temple ever recover. Small children whose indoctrination still incomplete, have been known to resist attempts to take them to the temple because that is their way you go to die. despite this fact, sick adults are not only willing, but eager to undergo the protracted of Richard or purification, if they can afford to do so, no matter how ill the supplicant or how grave, the emergency, the guardians of many temples will not admit a client.

If he cannot give a rich gift to the custodian, even after one has gained admission and survive the ceremonies, the guardians will not permit the near to leave until he makes another gift.

The applicant entering the temple is first stripped of all his or her clothes. In everyday life, the na rema avoid exposure of the body and its natural functions.

Bathing and exc acts are performed only in the secret of the household shrine, where the ritualized as part of the body rights psychological shock, results from the fact that body secrecy is suddenly lost upon entry into the latic zone. A man whose own wife has never seen him, in an excu act suddenly finds himself naked and assisted by a vessel maiden while he performs his natural functions into a sacred vessel.

This sort of ceremonial treatment is resuscitated by the fact that the excreta are used by diviner to ascertain in the course and nature of their client's sickness. Female clients, on the other hand, find their naked bodies are subjected to the scrutiny, manipulation, and prodding of the medicine. Men.

Few nts in the temple are well enough to do anything but lie on their hard beds.

The daily ceremonies like the rights of the Holy Mouth, men evolve discomfort and torture with ritual precision.

The vessels awaken their miserable charges each dawn and roll them about on their beds of pain, while performing a pollutions in the formal movements of which the maidens highly trained. At other times, they exert magical magic wands in the supplement's mouths or forts in to eat substances, which are supposed to be healing. From time to time, the medicine men come to their clients and jab magically treated needles into their flesh.

The fact that these temple ceremonies may not cure and may even kill the near fight in no way decreases the people's face. Faith in the medicine men, there remains one other kind of practitioner known as the li the listener.

This witch doctor has the power to exercise Devil's Lodge in the heads of people who have been bewitched. The Naima believe, that parents bewitched their own children.

Mothers are particularly suspected of putting a curse on children while teaching them the secret body rituals.

The counter magic of the witch doctor is unusual in its lack of ritual.

The patient simply tells the listener all his troubles and fears, beginning with the earliest difficulties he can remember.

The memory dista displayed by the Nas Remer in these exorcism sessions is truly remarkable.

It's not uncomfortable for the patient to bemoan the rejection he felt upon ween being weaned as a babe, and a few individuals even see their troubles going back to the traumatic effects of their own birth. In conclusion, mention must be made of certain practices which have their base in native aesthetics, but which depend upon the pervasive aversion to the natural body in its functions. These are ritual fast, so are ritual fast to make fat people thin and ceremonial feast to make thin people fat. Still, other rights, it used to make women's breasts large, larger, if they're small and smaller, if they're large.

General disaffection disaffected dissatisfaction with breast side shape is symbolized in the fact that an ideal form is virtually outside the range of human variation. A few women afflicted with almost inhumane, inhuman hyper memory development.

So idolized that they make a handsome living by simply going from village to village and permitting the neighbors to stare at them for a fee reference has already been made to the fact that functions are ritualized, routinized, and relegated to secrecy.

Natural reproductive functions are assimilate distorted.

Intercourse is taboo as a topic and scheduled as an act.

Efforts are made to avoid pregnancy by the use of magical materials or by limiting intercourse to certain phases of the moon.

Conception is actually very infrequent when pregnant women dress so as to hide their condition.

Perpetuation takes place in secret without friends or relatives to assist, and the majority of women do not nurse their infants.

Our review of the ritual life of the NASA Ramer has, certainly shown them to be a magic written people.

It is hard to understand how they have managed to exist so long under the burdens of which, they've imposed upon themselves, but even a lot, such exotic customs of these take on real meaning when they are viewed with insight provided by Malinowski when he wrote, looking from a far and above from our high places of safety in the developed civilization, it is easy to see all the crudity in irrelevance of magic, but without its power and guidance, early man could not have mastered his practical difficulties as he has done, nor could man have advanced to the highest state of civilization.

So this is, porous miners, spoof accounts of, what he saw, body rituals, standings of the body and health amongst, the Na Roma. so, think with that in mind, I want us, like us now to kind of, think about, some of, the points that, miner was making through that spoof, and think about some of the conceptual tools that anthropology has developed to, make sense of, some of the topics that are relevant to Covid, and then see how we might apply the way that anthropologists have, approached those to the study of, how, people actually, acted and the kind of things that they did, during the early phases of the lockdown and, the pandemic and so on.

So, first of all, I want to talk about, the different ways of thinking that anthropologists have, talk about, and I want to think about the distinction that was made, first of all, famously by, James Fraser in the Golden Bow, the distinction between, magic, religion and science. and, I in particular, for example, one of the distinctions about magic, for example, one of the things that he talked about, magic science was about, really looking at, the falsification of particular hypotheses.

So that's what scientists do, they think, critically, all kinds of, phenomena. but, scientists are, if you like, organized communities of skeptics. And while as Evans Pritchard family said, that, skeptics exist in all communities, particularly, and he said they do amongst the Andy, which he famously studied, that most people don't think skeptically all of the time, for example and many people, take things on trust in, religious

or ways, ways that can be described as religious. that we take things from authority on the basis of like, what we've learned from authority and also there's a great deal of magical thinking as well. so, a phrase for example, talked about sympathetic magic and, homeopathic magic and as well as contagious ma magic. So in the picture there, you see an, a witch woman from the Ozarks, which is, in the Midwest. It's, area where, it's remote and currently quite poor, a lot of settlers from the Appalachian wet there and here's a witch woman making, a little doll, which she names after her enemy, and then drives nails into the doll's body to hurt somebody. So this is a, actually like a, a a kind of a, a type of, sympathetic magic.

So it's like treating, jaundice with, gold rings because they're yellow sort of thing, and do that, that you can, have an effect on magic. The, the idea of sympathetic or homeopathic meaning it's like, is used to treat like sort of thing. co contagious magic is that we touch the bones of the saints to get better, and through the saints goodness that the contagious magic, might heal us or something like that. So, ma Malinowski developed this idea, more fully in science, magic, and religion, which is where quote, that minor used at the end of his piece actually comes from. right.

so, magic, is if you like, if, Tyler Fraser, Malinowski and others a kind of failed magic.

It's a sort of delusion and mals, and well Fraser, and so on, wanted to ask why is it that, or particularly, really, Evan Pritchett who came along, later, a bit later, wanted to ask the question, well, why do people continue to believe in magic when it, so obviously fails in so many contexts? They think that why, why should magic fail? Well, they have three reasons. They identified, three reasons in particular.

One is because sometimes magic seems to work or apparently seems to work. And, that I think they thought that that's probably because of, perhaps of coincidence or the magic is maybe used for something that they know is gonna happen anyway. So, because magic sometimes seems to work, that's why people continue to believe in it.

People sometimes when magic seems to fail, that perhaps, it's because they know that that magic does sometimes work, but also because failures may be attributed to errors in performance, violations of taboo and so on.

So the magic didn't work because perhaps some rating woman entered the temple and that violate the temple, and that violation of that particular taboo calls the magic to fail and failures sometimes are accounted for by, hostile entities who produce counter magic that's counter a counteract magic of hostile forms that makes, magic, not work sometimes.

and this is why some of the reasons why the belief in magic or magical belief, thinking, even though for those of us who report not to be magical, to believe in magic, that this kind of thinking is essentially magical thinking, and this is why it's persistent. So, Martinovski looked at that in things in coral gardens, famously looked at that in magic science and religion and theoretical terms.

He looked at it in more, empirical terms in coral gardens and their magic and in sexual life of savages.

And, he saw, Malinowski had a sort of functionalist idea that, religion and magic could be understood as the human means of relaying anxiety, about uncertainty, about death and so forth. and, the unknown, the fear of spiritual beings. and what the Malinowski magic did was it allowed man or humans the conceit of having, a mastery of his fate. So this is what magic did. It was a way of, relieving our anxieties about the unknown, but magic in coral gardens and the magic that, that what, Malinowski said that magic also allowed, control and coordination, order and control in technical activities.

So certain kind of spells would be associated, or certain kind of magic would be associated with, practical activities, which were clearly helped, the gardens to grow well. But, cause it was also surrounded by all kinds of spells that, so perhaps, so for example, the reason why, doctors wear white coats and, nurses certain uniforms and all these things is arguably perhaps part of our magical thinking in a way.

But what they pa arguably also does, it allows some coordination and order, in terms of, the control of the more technical aspects of, medical, practice. So, the problem with Malofsky's idea that magic was about, re allaying anxieties was that, some anthropologists have noticed that beliefs in magic and, religion may be produce as many anxieties as they, as they relieve.

So that was a criticism of Malinowski with, levy Brawl br rather, in how natives think that, he, he thought that, primitive thought was, that the thought of so-called primitives was essentially, mystical.

That he thought that, people in, in preliterate, cultures or societies that they saw that, natural objects had mystical powers or sacred cast, characteristics and that what he thought that people in those, cultures did was that they had some kind of mystical participation in those, objects and he thought that pre-literate thought wasn't really very much concerned with contradictions between, what we might think is evidently, false and what they thought, should happen in terms of things like magical beliefs not working.

So what can anthropological ideas about, magic and irrational thought, tell us that, um and, I think what one of the things that really have, shown us is that we don't really, always respect the need for peer review and scientific methods.

So a lot of the time in our thinking about, COVID 19, coronavirus, the need for lockdown and so on, that a lot of our thinking about that it was arguably determined by, our exposure to, irrational beliefs in many cases.

So, any, the example I put here on the slide, on the pitcher slide was that when famously, Donald Trump suggested that we use, infect injections of disinfectant, the Covid 19, well, I don't imagine that this has been the subject of a peer reviewed Harvard, study. But, um I may be wrong on not count, but I think that what it shows is that, many people, I mean, that's a kind of rather dramatic example, but I think many people, ideas about, covid were really, taken if you liked, from others with authority, that, religiously and that kind of thought was like, if you like, magical insofar as it, didn't, much of the, the many of these eyes I ideas didn't really undergo

any kind of peer review or scientific method. So, what they tell us is that we sometimes seek help using methods by which, commended to us by hope and faith rather than experience and patient experimentation. So I think this is one of the, the, the kind of thoughts that, occurred to me, as thinking about this kind of period of the, early covid, 19 and, lockdown, periods. I want now to think about, witchcraft beliefs and, what, their importance for anthropology and what they might be able to tell us about this same, thing.

So until the professionalization of anthropologists that, beliefs in which craft, these were studied by social scientists, that, that, these provided evidence if irrational modes of that, of thinking amongst savage others. So witchcraft was something that, primitive people did. Primitive people had primitive, modes of thoughts. And this is a bit like the Levy Brawl article. and, witchcraft beliefs were situated by Fraser, Malinowski and others within debates, distinguishing between science, magic, and religion sort of thing. So witchcraft beliefs tended to, depending on what they were, tended to be situated between, magic and religion. now, the anthropologists really be, anthropology really came of age in terms of the study of religion with, Evans Pritchard's important monograph, which is pictured here, which graft oracles and magic amongst the Aand, published 1937.

And, this is really, if you like, the first really focused account accounts of the philosophical or, ideational system of a so-called primitive society. And this is the, a sandy of sudden southern Sudan. And what was, particularly important about it was that, Evan Pritchard's account of, sandy witchcraft beliefs was in expressed in terms of social, action, as well. So, Evans Pritchards gives us a great deal of context and tries to make sense of these beliefs in terms of their context to make sense of witchcraft, ideas and witchcraft beliefs. So, Evans Pritchards demonstrated that witchcraft beliefs, along with those surrounding sorcery magic and oracles form constituents of a logical and coherent system. This was a, philosophically a cohesive adherent system. And, Sandy, the ideas about witchcraft were really fundamentally were, were, organized about two, around two premises. One was that there's, there's no such thing as coincidence. There's one kind of tenant of, sandy philosophy, or at least orthodox Andy's, philosophy because as Pritchard said, there are sandy skeptics, just that there isn't an organized community of skeptics, as there is experience in, for example, in scientific departments or whatever, but they're nevertheless there individuals, sandy skeptics, but nevertheless, within mainstream, Andy thought that the, the two, beliefs underpinned their system was there's no theory of con, coherence and, of coincidence rather. And also, the second is the centrality of human agency. It's the course of misfortune.

So if any, the one is as subject or victim of, any kind of misfortune, maybe death or illness or whatever, loss of their grain, crop or whatever, this is because of a human agency in the form of what they call witchcraft and witchcraft was caused by individuals having witchcraft substance in their belly, something which he called, was in the sandy called mango and the thing about witchcraft was that, this is something that wasn't, unusual and very, very spooky or whatever it is, but something that which

was ubiquitous. People talked about witchcraft, about mango every day, that people talked about misfortunes, about being caused by witchcraft all the time. And, that they, so they were all the time people were seeking the causes of their particular misfortunes, misfortune of others. And what was important for, for anthropologists that what Evans Pritchard noticed was that he accounted for scapegoating envy and the marginalization of others. So if others were, marginalized in some way, if they were people were envious of them, or they wanted to scapegoat them in some way, it was them who really was, were the causes of misfortune.

It was them who projected witchcraft substance, or whatever it was that came from witchcraft substance to cause, the illness and deaths of others. So, witchcraft, in this idea has human agency. And if we see that this is something, that, arguably that, within some ideas, you see this, tweeted by Pier Corbin that the cv, pandemic, was Simi simulated in October, 2019 by mega rich control freaks, bill Gates, George Sores, and their cronies. So now it's for real.

So we have, human agency which, is causing, so it's others who are causing, misfortune. so, skip that one. so witchcraft, is what's important and Evans Pritchard made this influential distinction between witchcraft as a form of kind of, scapegoating.

So that misfortune is attributed to the actions of others who we dislike or we suspect of envy, or who, we are envious of, perhaps the rich and he made distinction between witchcraft, which is, and sorcery, sorcery a set of techniques, whereas witchcraft is something which comes in spite of yourself from within your own body. And you have, he Evans pritchards examined the role of the witch doctor and the relationship between, the mystical and the empirical, which was captured in his notion of the second spear and what that meant for the sandy. The second spear was that if, somehow the, the posts that hold up a graner house where the grain is, are eaten by term mite fall down and seriously injure or kill you, that the sandy know that it's the term mite, which have, caused the, post to disintegrate and fall on you. But what they say is, why did that happen to me at that particular time? Well, that's the second spear. and that's the kind of underlying reason behind the first spear, the kind of evident what seems to be the empirical cause of that misfortune.

So the sandy, you're interested in the second spear. So, and again, the Evans Pritchard, argued that, that witchcraft beliefs persist in the face of counter evidence and this was because a, it, comprised one, it, comprised an intellectually coherent system that accepted those two premises that no such thing as coincidence and all misfortune is humanly, humanly hoed by human agency, then that's fine, that it's skepticism is recognized, but only in relation to certain people and techniques not to the system.

So that, even the skeptics has to exist within a particular, the system where ideas about witchcraft are completely dominant.

Just as we exist in a system where we have to believe in the reality of money and capital and things like that, we may not believe in it, but nevertheless, we have to exist in that reality.

So it's the same for Andies have to exist in this system where mango is a sort of like dominant philosophical system. that failures of magic were explained by poor technique, counter magic breaking of tab booze. And that sometimes, as said earlier, that magic, some does seem to work sometimes, or perhaps in so far as it might predict events that would've happened anyway.

So what can anthropological work on witchcraft and the sorcery tell us, particularly about, covid 19 and early, human, reactions to it that, people, tended to look at human agencies responsible for the spread of, coronavirus things like, China, this is conspiracy by China, conspiracy by 5g, by, the internet companies to make people go more online because they were staying more at home and things like that. So people, attributed human motives, the appearance of coronavirus and covid, 19 very much as, many Zandi attributed human motives for, misfortunes caused by, witchcraft and so on and where people tended to find that human agency causing misfortune was where there were existing social tensions. So for example, with internet providers with, China and with people like Bill Gates and so on, that these are people with whom, many people are envious of them, or countries which were such as China, or places where, where there was this tension or 5G people, which people are su suspicious of.

So it's, there those kind of places that, we look for, misfortune. okay.

so I want to talk now, now, move to a slightly different kind of, thing and look about, the notion, the relationship be, between ideas about pollution and, covid 19. So I want to talk about, people called them, me, the mirror, a people of, Kenya, Kenya and, the Meru, megaway, which is a religious leader amongst the Meru and the Meru, Meg Uhwas left hand. The left hand is in some sense, very powerful and sacred, but it's also, in some sense like polluting. And we have to, that the Marrow megaway are one of, many peoples who make a symbolic important, distinction, the, between, right and left. and that this is a society which there is, if you like, that the universe or the cosmos is divided into two principles.

This is something which is very common, anthropologist note.

So we can think of, the bar in South America where you have these two, principles as two other prince, two principles, which are similarly divided in everything such as clan, membership, and, to, the things exist in the world are divided into these two principles and for the mirror, the two principles are right and left. So you've got the, daylight, maleness, white, so-called white clans and political power. the left hand is associated with night with darkness, with female, things female with socalled, black clans, and with ritual authority. this is an article from Rodney Nedom, which you see the reference there. And, what, Meru, sorry, nedam was particularly interested in was, the Meru, uhwas left hand. He had this ritual, leader and why he's interested in why their left hand is considered, sacred and is covered during certain kinds of rituals, and, is kept on being polluting during those kind of rituals and these kind of ideas about rituals on pollution are really explored, theoretical terms, most fully by, or famously by, Mary Douglas, who I think was important, mentor for Chris and her famous book, purity and Danger, which is in 1966 where, Douglass, explained that, ideas about

pollution and why, PE things are considered polluting. Like, for example, in South Asia, certain casts are considered polluting that, certain, other things are considered polluting in other cultures, that they're, what they, they are to do with, it's not to do with things like matter outta place that human beings inevitably impose or different, cultures impose classifications on order, on an and order on tiny untidy experience.

So the world out there is really untidy. It's a, a, but what human, cultures do is that we classify the world into d different, principles like animal, mineral, vegetable or whatever and what we do with those that classifications, whether they, they're so-called class scientific classifications or, pre-scientific classifications like animal, mineral, vegetable or whatever, that they put impose order on untidy experience. So you have, Australian Aboriginal peoples who, organize, the cosmos into eight principles.

You have eight clans that marry into each other in certain ways. certain, prescribed way in each of those clans is responsible for a particular area of knowledge, or particular part of the universe, which has devolved onto those clans during the period of the dreaming and it's through those, through certain marriages, and certainly in actions that you maintain those classifications and maintain that order of the use of the universe and things that are outta place that don't fit into that universe are polluting, or some sense ritually suspect, a, a a suspect or in some instances are made sacred. so things that are sacred and polluting are both, in some sense, things which are outside of being, easily classifiable within the particular soft system of knowledge that you have. So, human beings deal with these in different ways. One example is spice, killing twins or infants with inverted commerce deformities.

So this is how human beings, deal with these, with, things, untidy in terms of their, the forms of classification that they have.

So, see, Louis duos, homo Hierarchist for more of this in relation to the, south Asian cast, system so matter outta place, and, purity and danger and things like that. And it's keeping, certain things, ritually in, isolated from one another. So you have here kind of, um social distancing, of course. our hunter gatherer specialists such as Jerome, Ingrid, Mona and others say that we've been, many of us have been socially distancing for, for, um 10,000 years or whatever. But, anyway, that, this is arguably to be understood in ideas about purity and danger that covid, threatens, our bodily purity and that, that we, keep away from it. That's how we do it.

It, so an anomalous categories are really, Mary Douglas argue is really what we should be concerned with as anthropologists in that these are things that defy, particular classifications within the cultures. So within Leviticus, for example, it's all the, those in the waters, the fowls, the beast, the creeping things, all of those kind of things are part of, the social orders I remember. But then you've got, and it's those unambiguous animals that are considered, in Leviticus as being edible, but some, a anomalous animals with funny who's or who do funny things, which are considered abominations, those things which are hard to classify, and those things are considered, inedible and abominations.

sacrificial animals have to be, unblemished. So we have to, if we're gonna eat things for sacrifice, they have to be, unblemished, which is perhaps really perhaps why, Morisons have, really, had to really sort of reinvent, the blemished carrots and things like that, that, some of us are brave enough to eat.

They will buy naturally wonky carrots. but many people perhaps are rather, feel rather queasy about this idea, cause their carrots in some sense, blemished. And, this idea of, Mary Douglas, that, things, she was very critical of the idea that these, anomalous categories have to be understood in terms of medical materialism.

So the argument that Arabs and Jews don't eat, pork because, pork went off very easily in the desert and was, good, food poisoning.

She thought that was an absolute nonsense that Douglas kind of, from, I'm sure very rightly, thought that this was much more to do with, if you like, things that were problematic in terms of human classifications and the organization of, cultural and social knowledge. So, you find this in why certain creatures become as, assume, if you like, such ritual importance and become sacred, in some ways, like examples of, pangolin dolphin in Andes, so amongst the LE and, in Africa, whom Mary Douglass studied, that you have, I think that's in Zambia that the, pangolin is considered, it's the focus of ritual attention and, cult attention and it's sacred in some sense because it has scales like a fish, find it on top of trees like a, a bird, but at the same time, it's mainly runs along the ground.

So it belongs in those three areas of expe of, experience the waters, the air and earth. And in that sense, it's, it doesn't fit comfortably into any of those areas of lelay, knowledge or classification. So it becomes the focus of ritual attention, and it becomes sacred in some sense amongst kabak. That's, Portuguese speaking, paries in the Amazon that river dolphins also acquire, that, because obviously they look and do what tend to do what fish do.

But the same sense quite obviously, that, um once you look at them in terms of, if you cut one up and look at it, you could clearly see that it's, not really a fish, that it's more like animals on the land.

So dolphins in many parts of, south America and other, perhaps other areas also assume, that kind of, significance in terms of being ritual knowledge amongst the mosquito and ramma of Nicaragua. It's manatees, which are often called, sometimes called sea cows by some people also are similarly, problematized and also the focus of, considerable ritual, attention and, somehow often, represent, a behalf, some kind of, key important, roles in the social classification of people or through certain kind of rat rituals where they're butchered and killed and eaten, and the meat divided in particular ways that we enforce social integration.

okay. lemme see, how we're doing for the time.

I don't think I've got time to look at this stuff on the sar. so what I, I wanted now at is also, some views on in warfare and the production of persons as well. And what, that might, tell us, that, so yeah, just before that I just wanted, sorry, I missed this one, is this slide.

What can pollution beliefs actually tell us about Covid 19? Kind that Mary Douglas is interrogated in the kind that really what it they represent is that they say that the health of the body in some sense represents the health of society. This is a Dian idea, but it's also an idea that it goes back to Fraser.

That Fraser's idea was with the killing of the divine king, the king of sacred priest, king of namie that killed the priest. And that, that, the person who kills the priest becomes the new priest king and so forth, that you kill the priest king because his body is failing, and that's why the crop or the fertility of the kingdom is failing.

So the health of the body represents the health of, kind of society and, with, things which I didn't look at the saral with things like the closure of, bodily orifices and the containment of ex uvi things, which is matter outta place with Douglas schools matter outta place that you minimize those threats to the body, but also you minimize those threats, to society. And it's through the, through that perhaps we can understand kind of, how anthropologists might think about things like social distancing, the use of face masks and other PPA equipments by the lay public, that this is to, if you like, to stop what is perceived of those ki of that kind of pollution, which somehow, and you can see the link between, coronavirus has being, polluting and, somehow being socially, polluting when you say, stop coronavirus deport to all illegal aliens, see this close the border stop immigration and I remember at the time that some people who, Chinese or Chinese origin, even though that they, many of them may not have been to China for a long time or never been to China, if they were, um perhaps Cantonese dis descent, Hong Kong Chinese descent or whatever bill were lived in this country for a long time or whatever, or that they had as much chance of, giving people coronavirus as anyone else, or not giving it as anyone else.

But nevertheless, somehow there was this kind of anti-Chinese kind feeling that, Chinese people were threats to the health of our society and also the health to the health of bodies, people within that society. let's see how, for time, okay. Mark, go. Don't worry. Just keep, just take, take it as you've, yeah.

Is that okay? Yeah, yeah. Fine. Just keep going. Okay.

Right. I want then just to talk, I'm getting quite near the end anyway. So, I wanna talk just about, another topic cause, shaman is some warfare in the production of purposes of persons production, of persons that what many, amerson is slow and South American is Sova, who works, is that, really what, lowland south and Central American cultures are really, being concerned with at least, in, are concerned with the production of persons and of extracting power to, produce more persons and extracting the power persons of others.

So this is really, this idea is a little bit informed by Santos Grier's view of Amazonian politics of the occult, and where he argues that lowland warfare, and this is of the particularly warfare through shamanic attack, is less about numbers killed and about extracting as much as possible from their victims. So in, ATAR headhunting, in the past, it's really what head hunting is about. It's not so much vengeance. It's about, that things like faces and souls for the actual existing finite quantity, there's a

limited amount of them. So warfare and head hunting is about, getting, faces for your particular group from other groups and also souls and therefore, predation is essential for the production of purposes. and, it's through warfare that, that, your, that afa that enemies, your enemy became your come your prey, and, that, so forth.

So you have this, if you like, this, alignment of AKs, in other words, your in-laws versus, cons, sanguine your own family, kin our equivalent to enemies, like your enemies are your aines.

So the whole thing about Amazonian kinship and politics is that it's really centered on the domestication of the final avo. In other words, really turning your in-laws from, dangerous enemies into something that you can deal with and different Amazonian societies handle that in kind of different ways.

Either they make them kin like the Piro or, they, attack them and, take hostages from the others, like, or that's the theory of to, to kind of, to, to kao warfare and so forth. Or, they capture them through, in-law capture like, for example, the mosquito and so forth. So this is how you domesticate your in-laws.

It's really central to, Amazonian politics and so then, so, this is, what it's really all about.

So what shamans do is about, what shamans are very good at is they monopolize ritual techniques of life giving. So it's those Shama shamans who he can help you get pregnant, stop you get pregnant, who can make you heal the sick, who can make the well sick if they need to be.

They are really guaranteed health and fertility to both human beings and the environment and political power of shamans and the rituals of production are, for Santas guero, thereby, Mitch, mutually intertwined and we can see how that kind of works in a sort of, adopt a sick note for work. There's, an example of a pro performance, sick notes water. So this is where political power and, rituals of, the production of persons actually intersect in our own society.

John looked at, piro, shaman's, in, in, in terms of that, so, the Amazonian populations are not economies of resources, but really economies of people that it's economies of persons, and it's the latter that are in short supply, and therefore mystical technologies in practice are focusing and obtaining this and what shamanism for many Amazonian societies is a male preserve, symbolically in legitimating, economic and political order.

So what can shamanism, tell us about Covid-19 that perhaps that that the spread of coronavirus is, con is a matter of the work of enemy shamans and, that we use our shamans enter those other worlds to do battle with those enemy shamans and, do baffle with the magic that is sent by those enemy shamans.

This is very much an am usonian perspective, but it's something which we certainly kind of, struck me when listening to some of the discourses on, in the early days of, COVID 19 emergency and the lockdown. So the idea, it was also that, shamans are responsible for our health and wellbeing, for keeping foreign bodies human and otherwise at arm's length.

So this is what shamans in the Amazonian conception are like. And, this is something which we perhaps, certainly occurred to me during, the, the height of the covid-19 emergency.

So, what, maternity, one thing that, Max Faber, if we can come back to our point about, early ideas about magic and religion was Max Faber famously predicted that modernities, which came with the gring dominance of rational capitalism, would produce a disenchantment of the world and the abolition of magic.

That modernity, spreading through capitalism would produce this, new rational way of thinking and would be become disadvantaged.

The gods would be banished and magic would be abolished.

But the evidence has that since come to light, suggests that var was quite wrong, and that mod, so-called moderns acquired as irrational as their pre capitalist four bears and I think that the kind of, ideas about, COVID 19, and there's some of them, on the right, some of the ones that were, seemed to be around, that the, these, it seems to be that quite right, this criticism of var seems to me quite right. So, we have the assumptions of, governing the universality of cap money and capitalism, and the critique, the universality of private property and notions of ownership. Andre, critique the, of the University of the FA family that the anthropologists did that like Morgan and Engels and so forth. And this is what one of, Morgan's and Marks and Engels, they, put forward these kind of ideas, all of these ideas about private property, the family, money capital, these all social and historical constructs and at capital then becomes very much like a supernatural power, like, Manor or Waan Manor is the, a type of supernatural power in the Pacific.

Waan is, the Lakota and Dakota, idea about supernatural power, which is similar to other ideas in the North American plains.

So money and capital are supernatural power. It's about mystification.

We've got commodity fetishism, alienation.

So what can, Marx's interrogation of capitalism culture tell us that we have fetishized, coronavirus and attributed to its supernatural powers that we've lost our agent to control over our bodies from which we've become alienated and therefore become dependent on forms of magic that don't work? Has, coronavirus did it show us all of that? So views from anthropology.

Do popular views coronavirus terrorists? Tell us anything about modes of thought and irrational beliefs about witch and sorcery, about order pollution and the social body about medicine.

Men and bad spirits, about capital and the virus as, as supernatural powers that the virus is very much like capital and in so far it's a supernatural power. I don't know.

I'll leave it to you to gimme some ideas. Thank you very much.

Wow. Thanks, mark.

You've just done the whole history of anthropology in relation to coronavirus.

Wow. Got a lot to choose from there. does, does anybody want to come up with comments or questions for Mark? Very good education. Matt.

Any immediate thoughts? Chris, you good to go? absolutely fantastic and hugely funny and brilliant. I was, I couldn't help laughing.

I tried not to laugh too loud in case it interfered with the proceedings.

I know there's lot of noise coming from behind you as well. Of course. oh yeah, sorry About That. It's like the clangers, the clangers, the magical clangers are in the background. Yeah.

So, but, okay. I mean, I, yeah, I, I presume you're not saying, that, the idea that we should keep, two meters apart was magical thinking.

Cause I have a feeling you broke up, Chris.

I have a feeling that the virus is a real thing in some sense, and we'd rather, sorry, can You say that again? Chris? You broke up. I couldn't hear that.

Okay. I'm assuming that we're not accusing, the medical establishment and all those who told us you must keep two meters apart. I'm assuming you're not, you're not treating that as magical thinking, and I'm assuming you agree with me that actually those viruses in some sense are real, and that if you didn't want to get rather ill, and if you are rather old, you might get dead and we actually needed to keep two meters apart for reasons of science, not reasons of magical superstition. am I right in making those assumptions? Yes, You are, Chris. I, I'm not thinking, I'm not, I'm not in any way, as I tried to say at the beginning, downplaying the very, the reality of, the virus. And in any sense, the danger to it. But what I'm really interested in is, in the paper is that the popular understanding of coronavirus and some kind of popular ideas, and of course, the two meters, a rule that, that may well have had, some basis in, um sci scientific understanding of how the virus is transmitted.

I really don't know. But the, what we took that on was really, in some sense, most of us took that, that on, is that we didn't know the science behind it.

We took it on as religious faith in terms of it being religious faith and that what it did was it made us, or many of us for quite a long time, behave in ways that we never behaved before, because we took this, on, on this, this idea as, in, in terms of truth in religious terms.

So I'm not in any way trying to do that. I had, my, jabs, they're glad I had them, and it didn't stop me getting it twice. I got it twice.

But I, I I, I, I did have the jabs and I believe in believed in the reality.

I believe in the reality of the vi of a coronavirus and the different strains and all that. But what I'm really interested in, in terms of the, this paper is what, popular reactions to and ideas about coronavirus can tell us about, irrational thinking in, modern Britain and, other places from where all of you might be North America or wherever you are, watching this from.

Hmm. Yeah, because of course, really at the beginning there was a lot of confusion about whether it was being transmitted by surfaces or by Airborne, and there was a lot of resistance to assuming it was airborne, because that had whole, whole different implications.

So people were doing all this polishing of surfaces and disinfectant Yeah. Whole roads and, and this, this did turn out to be a really magical effort. Yeah.

I mean, in defense of, the science, at the time that, they didn't have time to sort of do research and wait for, peer reviewed papers to clarify which was which, and which was not worth which was, if either of them were effective or not, but nevertheless, that, that, so they had to, put them out there, sort of thing is, if you like and that the way in which we perhaps, interacted with those ideas was in some sense, religious or magical.

Mm-hmm. I had a, a a couple of other points on each, some of these theories. one in terms of the sort of the politics of witchcraft because of this, this, this, kind of changes whether it's kind of punching up against more powerful people and telling them, or punching down against the marginalized. Hmm. And of course, that could go, that could flip either way with Yeah. Covid. I mean, and, and it's interesting to analyze why it did in different circumstances.

Go right away. Yeah. and then another point is, well, the co the pollution associated to Covid did not really, acquire any aspect of sacredness, did it? Because of course, the pangolins and the mug was hand have this strange, ambiguity of being both polluting but also sacred, which, and, and, and, destroying classification. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Creating the sacred. So, so that's kind of a, a bit of a, a, an issue there with, with Covid. And the other aspect of it, with the marks and the capitalism was there was an ex, well linking perhaps to Veba. of course, COVID actually stopped capitalism in its tracks quite extraordinarily. I mean, you did not expect that bunch of Tory scum cabinet.

They didn't want to have a lockdown.

They wanted to carry on trading and give grit in the edge. But, but they were forced to a position because the scientists said to them, you'll have half a million dead people if you don't Yeah.

Do the lockdown and actually bring capitalism to a screeching halt.

Yeah, yeah. So you could say, well, maybe you could say, if var is associated to disenchantment, Protestant ethics, spirit of capitalism, that that was the antithesis of capitalism suddenly rise to all this, this. I Think those are all excellent points. Camilla, in, in terms of the, your first point, though, is probably the one I, I've just making a comment of and treat the others as, excellent observations. but the first, but anthropologists, anthropologists have, noted that, witchcraft accusations do in fact, as you say, work two ways that they're, are usually envy and they're also fear of envy is, so those are the two sides. So it's the rich, of scribe, witchcraft to the poor, and the poor ascribe witchcraft to the rich.

But where you find it mostly is where there are economic imbalances, because when people, more or less have, broadly speaking the same not broadly speaking, compar comparable lifestyle, there isn't a comparative deemphasis on witchcraft. And I wrote, two papers on this where, I looked at how the mosquito growing inequalities had produced, grown belief in, sorcery, which had always existed, but there was now a much greater emphasis on, sorcery.

Whereas before you had, shamans who would, if it was misfortune, and people came to the shamans to ask them, well, what's going on? They would describe the causes of misfortune externally to external spirits from within the mosquito demonology. And it was more an emphasis. But with the, inroads made by, the monetization of the mis of the mosquito economy, at least in the two villages where I looked, I, I was, I was working, which I examined comparatively, that you had this, gradual rece, recession of, shamanic authority and shamans were within the village who projected the causes of misfortune outside the village to supernatural others. And more of this idea where, of sorcery where there were, the causes of misfortune were caused by others living other, other human beings within the community, with whom, um there was some, either envy or fear of envy of those.

So I've actually got two papers that actually look at that, but of course, it's, Evans Pritchard and who really, and of course Max Marwick in his famous paper on witchcraft, which is, one of the classic papers on exactly that point.

Thanks. Have we got other questions here on this? Any aspects of people's experience that are, illuminated by Mark's observation? Oh, we must be able to, Oh, it, Did we have somebody? yeah. I'm sort of, on the capitalism thing. Oh, mark, mark came, come on.

Hi. Hi. Thanks, mark. That was very interesting. I missed, I missed the beginning. Can you hear me? Yeah. Hi. Yeah, I Can You, yeah, I missed the beginning.

So sorry if you sort of said something to this, but I, I just wanna sort of throw a couple of, I consider to be facts anyway.

I mean, the act have always disputed, but I mean, the one most obvious one is that pandemics happen.

Mm-hmm.

I mean, this has been the reality of at least civilization, for 10,000 years. And they happen on a vast scale.

They caused the collapse of civilizations.

There's serious evidence that the Roman Empire might have collapsed, in part because of some form of plague. certainly we know about the black death in Europe wiped out.

40% of the population transformed society entirely.

Many theories that capitalism is a product of that social collapse. and of course, the 1918 flu pandemic was extraordinarily, in, in influential, damaging, and destructive. But of course, what happened after 9 19 18 flu pandemic is that there was this massive level of denial that had ever happened.

So much so that the number of books and research papers into the 1918 flu pandemic was tiny in the last century. There's been more since, apparently. But this level of denial, because, because it killed perhaps a hundred million people, may maybe not that many mm-hmm. Was staggering and we've gone through exactly the same process, the level of denial across the planet about what we've been through, what we're going through, what we might, might happen in the future.

I find quite shocking that humanity has just kind of gone into this, this, this situation. I mean, there were news reports a few weeks ago about, we got about a one in three chance, something like that, of another pandemic, a different virus or something over the next 10 or 20 years. That, that's a rough prediction of various, scientists. I mean, these things are always debated, but it's a real prospect, especially with climate change, and especially with the way in which we're developing inter areas, wild areas, putting humans very close to bats and other animals, all these processes, the evidence is overwhelming. That, that, that, that, that, that, that it was a zoonotic origin of the Covid virus. Just as AIDS was obviously knocked from a lab or anything else. I mean, the ev clearly, it's absolute, not, not almost entirely nonsense, the idea that it comes from a Chinese lab. There's very little evidence, there's overwhelming evidence that it came from the countryside. It came from, from live animals. We don't know that a hundred percent, but we're 99% there and yet, from what I've read, I was just looking at it, apparently 66% of the American public believe that it comes, that covid came from a Chinese lab, despite the fact there is simply minimal scientific evidence, but cause people want to somehow believe it's an enemy, that it's a political problem rather than a basic, fundamental problem of, well, it is a political problem. Our, our, our social system is a political problem.

But I mean, back in 2020, it was just nut cases. And Donald Trump, who thought that it was all from a Chinese lab, and now most of the population in the West seem to believe this.

It really is quite scary. I mean, we should, we, we shouldn't be surprised this what, what you just said, yes.

That, that, that humans do. They, they, they, they project onto other people, and they, but psychologically, why is it, do you think, mark, that we find it more comfortable to think that disease isn't so much from nature or from bigger situations we're creating around nature, but actually comes from individual bad actors, witches, and others? What is the psychological aspect of that? Well, that's very interesting. I mean, I'm not a psychologist to really answer that question, but it is excellent and I, the points, and I think, but I, I, as I said at the be very beginning, which would've missed Mark, that I no way deny the existence to the pandemic, and that I got my jabs and I had it twice and was quite unwell for one of them and so on. So I no way, deny, the reality.

But what I'm interested in is exactly those points of why it is, how, what the popular reaction was. It, that's what my paper was about. And the, how we act and, people, or, and what I think this kind of crisis did was that it, showed up, if you like, what might have been some anthropologists have called, modes of irrational thought, if you like, very, very clearly. And I think that, your point about, why, is it that so many people, continue in fact war seem to be believing that, that, covid, originated in a, a laboratory in Wuhan or whatever, that, that's the kind of thing that I'm interested in and I'm interested in anthropological terms, why it is that, is, that, it's, that it's attributed to an o another, in other words, China, which we are fearful of because,

um I think many people are fearful of the, of, in particular, of the Chinese economy and things like that. And, I think, that, China represents for many people as sort of dangerous others kind of thing.

And, I think, as, scientists guero, argue that it's those dangerous others who, if you like, are, it's from those dangerous others that, hostile shamanic, attacks come from.

I dunno if that, addresses what you were saying.

Is it also to do with denying nature agency? We prefer to have agency within the human realm. Oh, yes.

Like the idea of nature outta control anding itself upon us.

That's a really, really Interesting, and therefore the Chinese aversion is preferred because it, it, it offers control. Mm-hmm.

The other one is, having an earth of treat the thousand things like straw dogs.

No one likes that one.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, in, in terms of, my, the two papers that I alluded to that was looking at exactly this point, I was arguing that in, situation where there was more or less equality of economic opportunity in these two mosquito villages. Well, one mosquito and one all were, but mosquito speaking. But, that, that misfortune, the causes of ma misfortune were projected outwards by, community shamans outwards, onto non-human others.

But as soon as you get these sort of, economic inequalities that start to be felt, that, that's when you begin to, get, that those misfortunes begin to find, human agents sort of thing, if you like.

I don't know, Any more. I really, can you say something about your question in the chat, or do you want me to read it? It was responding to Mark's question to Mark, and talking about the memory of the 18 to 19 flu and Irene says, because I realized from 2020 this memory's very localized, along with all rituals of protection against epidemics in various communities.

Some remember and follow them, other communities have no idea about it, even if they might be close to the former communities geographically.

So how can we understand those differences in remembering learning and establishing processes? Is there the same kind of localization going on with Covid in terms of covid denial or forgetting? I wonder.

Hi. Thank you. Thank, thank you for, for this Camila. Actually, I'm not sure because I don't have as much information as we have today about it. I know about some communities. I'm, I'm originally from Greece, so I, I know some communities that were hardly hit by the influenza, of 19, 19, 18. And, those communities reacted in a completely different way, during the pandemic of, of Covid and they were also considered to be exaggerating and it is very interesting because I, I started observing and, the rituals of avoiding, I dunno, an epidemic. They were there.

But I, I was thinking that this was something like, a co common thing. And when, when, when the, the authority started giving instructions, I realized that the rituals of avoiding the epidemic are not a common thing. That they exist in some communities,

but they don't exist in other communities. And they have to be, people have to be instructed to establish some, some ways of doing things.

So my question is how we can understand this, these differences, through the magic or I don't know, because some communities seem to have this knowledge, but not all of them, even in the same country or same region.

that's a really, really interesting Uranus, thank you very much. I, I I'm not sure how, we might understand those differences, but the fact that there are such differences suggests that these kind of reactions to these kind of things are, to some extent, or at least in this context, culturally constructed sort of thing. And, in that sense that, it, it, it, it's interesting that there are those differences in that the, those differences might be significantly different in and, that insofar as those differences are culturally constructed, that perhaps, that is sort of, perhaps some evidence for, I guess what I was just trying to kind of throw up in this presentation sort of thing. Yeah. But in, in terms of the differences, perhaps, perhaps those differences are to be understood in, in the, at the time the relative, isolation from of those communities to one another insofar as the perhaps, people were less mobile, stayed more within their communities. So, different kind of, if you like, types of action that might have been taken or different practices, protective and ritualized, protective practices might be, not really kind of spread very far from, one community to another.

Whereas of course, in, the pandemic and the kind of reactions that we are familiar with, of course, the, the reason that we kind of broadly speaking or share a lot of what we know about those reactions is, quite similar to what each of the other of us know is because we, have, the internet and, so forth so I can, sorry, Sorry. Go. I, I finished. Yeah. Okay. Just, it was so, what was so delightful and funny was the way you kept on juxtaposing various, sort of instructions from the government and to keep two meters apart with all sorts of other things, which, we all suddenly saw it a completely light and had to ask ourselves the question, well, is, is this perhaps magical thinking? And of course, and of course it's absolutely hilarious. but of course, the serious point is that the people who, were covid skeptics were very often the, the leading voices in covid skepticism were, were basic science skeptics.

The whole of science is a conspiracy. Mm-hmm. And of course, in particular climate science skeptic. So when you are showing us Pierce Corbin, describing the, the, the, the vaccine program as an attempt to poison everybody, cuz there's actually deliberately put, put, put Bill Gates and, and George, so note the antisemitism of, in that of course they deliberately put poison in, in the, in the vaccines in order to kill huge amounts of the population. of course everybody knows, this completely insane brother of poor, poor Jeremy Corbin thinks that, the, he, when I, I I, I used to be, I used to know him quite well because because of the links with Jeremy. And so we used to come across peers and he, he's always claimed that time. It's always changing because his sunspots and, when I, not at all willingly, but I sort of bumped into him a few years ago, he assured me that the whole planet is getting cooler. his evidence being that there was a, there's a climate conference up in Scandinavia somewhere where it

was actually snowing, and he thought that was a huge demonstration of the fact that the planet's, getting cooler. So I, I suppose that's the point is that there's a, there's a general skepticism of science, which of course you can sort of understand in the sense that as science becomes more and more sort of distance and anonymous and elitist and corporate funded, and where the scientists, at least until very recently just reported back to the government and didn't speak in their own voice as at last has outta the pointing out recently at last, now with the emergency of climate. So, so dire, so immediate now, long last beginning to not just speak to the politicians and, and, and the state, but talk, talk to all of us in their own voice. Um that may be changing a bit, but I suppose what has, I mean, I'm, I'm actually quite concerned about these conspiracy theories because, I put this, there have certainly been very good friends of mine, including people who've been attending these radical anthropology classes, who will be saying, well, Chris, there is a point about, about, about, bill Gates. I mean, he is funding these vaccines.

He's making a lot of money out of it. The more he the more vaccines, the more people are worried about vaccines, the more money he's gonna make and we know about Saru and they're happy people are sort of saying, well, you need to give, they're sort of telling me, Chris, you this and, I, I need to stop believing in science because actually science is lastly controlled by very rich people. And it's a rather scary amount of, sort of, well, maybe both sides are right they're skeptics and the scientists and, I think that's actually pretty very dangerous. And I, I'm sort of, I'm wondering, actually, I'm even wondering even, even this evening, whether there's some people here who, possibly, um might be dissidents in terms of what what you've been saying might actually be yeah.

I mean, I mean, the thing with science is that, I mean, what, makes science different perhaps to, in some, and in some ways similar to kind of skeptics of science, if you like, and, also perhaps the zandy skeptics of this, all that is, that scientific, understanding is based at least ideally on, well, scientific method really in the, in the sense that it's, about, producing hypothesize hypotheses and then falsifying those hypotheses and so forth, and keeping a healthily skeptic, skeptical attitude and using, um principle methods of, inquiry and experimentation, and, and so on. where was I going with that, kind of Similarity of skeptics and of, of scientists and skeptics of science. Yeah.

But the, the point is with the skeptics, I mean, the thing about, sciences is, organized communities of, of, of skeptics who, are skeptical, who have, a principle skepticism. Now, I don't mean a morally principle skepticism necessarily, although it might be, but a principle skepticism insofar as it ideally is princip, it is principles because it uses the tenets of, scientific method in a kind of, um recommended sense of people like p and things like, I don't know, whoever that, that it's, it's about, um that's how science should work.

Of course, it's not necessarily, ethically or morally necessarily principled in the sense that, science, although it may be, the thing about science is why that it's got some traction is that quite a lot of it seems to work the lot of, science, it, it, it it has, end

product, if you like. The problem with it, it end is that it's, to what ends are, is that, product for what ends is that product produce kind of thing and that's the kind of, the kind of issue.

But the problem isn't necessarily with, science as a kind of, type of practice in a ideal kind of sense. It's, the problem is with, how sciences actually might be used.

The, the key point about science is that it's collectivist, that you can't look, it's Collectivist. Yeah, that's where I was going, Chris, in that it's an organized community of skeptics. So, zandy skepticism, there is a, the don't have science in inverted commerce is that, that they have the zandi have many skeptics, but there isn't really a, an organized community of a funded, community of skeptics that every time a Zandi skeptic, dies, that, um that's part of the critique of mango.

The ideas about mango sort of, is lost sort of thing John, Well, it also, I mean, surely scientific thought embraces uncertainty. Uncertainty, Absolutely. Yeah.

Fundamental to, an scientific process. Yeah.

That's one reason why it's not liked and not understood, because people prefer certainty.

Yes, exactly. I mean, and that's, I think the key difference between, as Fraser and Malinowski and Sawit is between science on the one hand, and, magic and religion on the other in so far as, magical and religious thinking were based on, certainties, whereas science wasn't, it was based on, importantly on uncertainty and, um examining those uncertainties and, seeing if through experimentation and examination, whether, we could, falsify those, uncertainties or whether experimenting, mentation or examination of the evidence actually lent, some kind of, of support to those ideas, even if it was, considered provisional in purely scientific terms.

Anymore thoughts? Anybody? we've got a couple of links online. Anyone else? I'm ju I'm just thinking of, well, the ways that, the different ways that people responded and reacted to masking and the, the way that changed through the, the whole academic and the course was so different culturally in different parts of the world. If you just think of, of, this part of the world and that that invoked an enormous degree of, of antagonism and, and now today especially so because it's as if, if you are wearing a mask, it's almost like you are contagious or some something, or that you are bringing the, the, the contagion there. just recently have with experience of my sister in hospital where she was immuno-suppressed, and it was very hard to get medical staff to, to wear masks in those contexts, which was quite, yeah.

Quite scary for her. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

So have people with scientific training who should understand it and resent. Yeah.

I mean, in instances like that is okay, maybe you think, there's no evidence for it, but, don't know that you or you don't, you're not certain why take a chance.

You're in a situation where you don't need to take a chance, just put on a mask.

You know, you don't, it may not have any effect, but it might it doesn't hurt to put the mask on, does it? You know, that's Absolutely, that's One old mosquito men man

said to me when talking about shamanism. He said, why take a chance? You know? That's exactly it. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah.

Mark, have you got some more thoughts? Well, I, I mean, I'll just say that, I mean, as, as I understand it and things are changing all the time, and I must admit, I get as confused as everyone else.

There seems to be a polarization across the western world between a sort of a, those who are pro, sort of a neoliberal elites and are therefore very pro-science, certainly pro vaccines, if you'd like, the establishment, often associated with the so-called mainstream media and then you've got this sort of Anti-establishment, but it is mostly right wing, although sometimes it does think it's left wing, which has this very strong anti-science, bias, and often anti-vaccine bias. I mean, we've now got a situation in America where two likely possible candidates in the, in the next presidential election, DeSantis in Florida, and Robert Kennedy Jr. Both seem to be very anti-vax.

We could have a situation in a few years time when there's another pandemic, and the US government are refusing to hand out and invest in vaccines because they think vaccines are some evil conspiracy by Bill Gates or whatever. I mean, it's hopefully not, but it is quite scary, and I think it's important.

Well, the only hope I can see is not to engage with either side there, because I don't think, I'm not a fan of big fans on it in the way it is set up now, or indeed Biden or Ki Star or any of that establishment, either is to find, is to create some other alternative, which is to put it crudely in any other old-fashioned way, science, real democratic science and socialism and crude and obvious.

But I think some, we, we have to sort of say that, and I suspect it's not perhaps for me to say, but it, I suspect a, a a a, a sensible one is socialist side society that took science seriously would do things like have three covid 19 tests for everyone so you could know whether your cough was covid or not, and not spread it to your family and others on buses and tubes and wearing a mask and masks the evidence, the masks is completely overwhelming.

That's not true. That masks, there's any controversy, they don't guarantee you won't get covid it, you won't spread covid.

But if you wear them on buses else, else elsewhere, it will reduce the spread and rather than having a million people having with covid at any one time, it could be down to a half a million, thousands of lives we saved.

It's not really rocket science and scientists, there's a consensus on that.

It's pretty unequivocal why the NHS have this reluctance to use masks because it's this bureaucratic mess controlled, in my opinion, controlled by ignorant Tory politicians and so they're just one, one week they have, they're told to wear masks and actually they're told you cannot wear masks and it's just, it's, it makes the Soviet Union look like a rational paradise.

The way the NHS in some respects is, well, despite the fact that it's British, British now, the respects, and one other thing just simple as this, I, i dunno the figures, but

just think of the amount of money that the governments, especially where British governments have spent on all sorts of things over these past few years to deal with covid 19, if 10%, some tiny fraction of that had just been spent improving ventilation in public buildings, the amount of, not just covid, but flus and other respiratory viruses would be hugely reduced and the life expectancy of all of us, because respiratory disease is according to some estimates, the number one cause of death, because flus and other such things weaken you and then bump you off in later years.

All our lives will be improved with a relative relatively small investment.

It's not that that's not happening. No one is even discussing it.

We're not even discussing the most basic things.

It's like not discussing water cleanliness in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It's just in incredible, in my opinion. Anyway. Yeah, Yeah. I mean, just to say to that, I mean, I, I'm a like you Mark, I think I'm a believer in, the science as used, in in, in, in for in the right kind of way.

But, as Dario said, and as you said, Dario in her post said, dunno, she's gone. But, that, there is, a lot of science which labors under conflicts of interest. And, it's that which inhi inhibits good science. And, this is something of course, which is the subject of Thomas Koon's famous. the structure of scientific revolutions is what inhibits, development of science is those conflicts of, interest, of all kinds, various kinds. e e everything from like, careers of where people have invested in particular ideas to, um more sinister, um sinister, reasons why good science doesn't, go and forth and so on. And, that's really where, the beef is. So there's people who, who think come critically about, how good science is. There are people who are very anti-science, but there also needs to be a space for people who think about how science should be used and, for what and, for whom and by whom sort of thing. And I think, that's what you're saying, mark, and, if that's so, and I think what Dario was saying in her post, I think that's really, interesting and good point.

Chris has got sound up. I didn't know if any No, I haven't, no. Sorry, sorry.

That was, I was just gonna add to back up Mark here that, yeah, that when I got Covid, it was the only time that we did not open the windows.

It was an incredibly cold night and the room, this was at ucl, the room at UCL claimed to be properly ventilated by these magic machines, but we didn't open the windows and not just me, but also Chris Scott Covid that time. Yeah.

Every other time we opened the windows.

Well, bad science produces bad technology, which has bad effects. And, also that we book the bad technology because we think we, we buy those, that technology because we think it's good that we are duped into, religiously, investing in bad technology because, um we have faith in science. The faith in faith in real good science is justified, but there's a lot of bad science out there. There's A lot of crap out there. Yes. A Lot of crap out there, Which is, which is propo, which is put in an authority.

It's wearing authoritative clothes.

Yeah.

But it doesn't, and All, all I'm suggesting in this paper, well, presentation is just that, that thinking about some of these issues using anthropological kind of conceptual tools can help us, think through some of those kind of issues, is what I was, I guess I was hoping to do rather than put forward a particular, so in a way, the, this presentation was more about, perhaps some of the uses that anthropology, the anthropological thinking, some of the popular uses that anthropological thinking might be put to sort of thing.

Yes. Chris, did you wanna comment in? And then maybe we can wrap up Incredibly, sort of lame and kind of obvious. I is, I mean, dash has quite rightly said, we need to say that there is considerable corruption of science Yeah.

In areas of child development forming, use, sleep training that gone, I think it's so important to say that, that it's corrupt of science and there's science, and I think it's so important to say that if, if a certain form of science is corrupt, if it's taking that form, what to save some politicians some money to, to make money for whatever, blah, blah, blah. I mean, if it's corrupt, I, I'm sorry, but is this, I don't think we should call it science. I mean, you can call it I suppose no harm in calling it sort of bad, bad, but I just think it's so important to keep alive the idea that there is such a thing as science and if, if a form of knowledge empowers certain people at the expense of others, white people, expense of black men at the expense of women, britains against the whatever, I'm sorry, but it's does not science at all, it's ideology. That's the word for it's ideology, is the kind of knowledge that's that's empowers certain people at the expense of others. My idea of science is that it's empowering of, if you're a human being, knowing that water consists of H 2 O 2 volumes of hydrogen into one of oxygen, whoever you are, whatever you, religion, whatever you raise, whatever, anywhere in the world, if you're doing electrolyzing water and that it's gonna be two volumes of hydrogen and one of oxygen, it'll, it'll give you you won't, you keep making mistakes. It's, it's carry in that sense.

So I'm saying knowledge, which is empowering of all of us because we're humans.

I call it science and knowledge. Empower some people at the expense of others.

I don't wanna call it science, I don't really wanna call it bad science.

It's ideology.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Completely that Chris, I completely buy that. Yeah.

Okay, let's end on that note.

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Mark Jamieson  
Conceptual tools from anthropology for thinking about early reactions to Covid-19  
(Seminar)  
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