

東邦大学学術リポジトリ

Toho University Academic Repository

タイトル	Collective Mentalities Yesterday and Today
作成者（著者）	MESSERKLINGER, Josef / VALENTINE, Andrew D.
公開者	東邦大学
発行日	2022.02.22
ISSN	03877566
掲載情報	東邦大学教養紀要. 53. p.1 18.
資料種別	紀要論文
内容記述	論文
著者版フラグ	publisher
JaLCDOI	info:doi/10.14994/toho.liberal.arts.rev.53.1
メタデータのURL	https://mylibrary.toho u.ac.jp/webopac/TD99080956

Collective Mentalities Yesterday and Today

Josef MESSERKLINGER, Toho University
Andrew D. VALENTINE, Mitsui Chemicals, Inc.

“Were those minds [of the Renaissance and Reformation] like our minds? I know that man’s essential nature is unchanging through time and space. I know that old tune. But that is an assumption, and I might add, a worthless assumption for a historian.”

Lucien Febvre¹

“The individual was imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape in which the infinite perspectives of the long term stretch into the distances both behind him and before.” Fernand Braudel²

As a man thinketh, so he is.—Book of Proverbs 23 : 7³

Introduction

In 1978, I entered my local U.K. bookshop, and stopped. There, on display, was a history book. It was very different to all history books I had seen. It was called, *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294-1324*.⁴ I didn’t know why or how it was different.

The books I had read, and was educated from, were traditional history books that dealt with traditional historical subjects of study, namely: events, the unique and particular, the non-repetitive, the short term, change over time, origins, growth, and development, progress, evolution, revolution, chronology, periodization, causation, motives, results or effects, conflict rather than consensus, differences rather than similarities, narratives, and the individual (great men,⁵ elites, ruling groups, kings and queens, presidents, prime ministers, war, diplomacy, foreign policy, nations, states, nationalism, imperialism, evolution of political institutions, politics, and power).

Montaillou, then, was different for me because it was my first sight of new history,

¹ Febvre, Lucien (1977) *Life in Renaissance France*, tr. Marian Rothstein, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p. 2.

² Braudel, Fernand (1972) *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. tr. Siân Reynolds, New York: Harper and Row p. 1244

³ cf. Browne, Mary (2017) Developing a Teaching Philosophy. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, Vol. 17, No.3, 59-63 “A teaching philosophy is a narrative essay which reflects an individual’s beliefs and values about teaching and learning, often including concrete examples of the ways in which that individual enacts those beliefs.”

⁴ Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel (1978) *Montaillou: Cathars and Catholics in a French Village 1294-1324*, tr. Barbra Bray, Scholar Press

⁵ NB. “The great man theory is a 19th-century idea according to which history can be largely explained by the impact of great men, or heroes.” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_man_theory retrieved July 19 2021)

or a book that examined the lives and beliefs or *mentalité* of ordinary people, in this case the people of Montaignou, a small village in the Pyrenees with only around 250 inhabitants, at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Background

New history, born with important milestone precedents beginning with Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), who thought himself back into the minds of the people he studied believing one should study them by studying their language and thought, as they used them; Karl Lamprecht (1856-1915) and his *Deutsch Geschichte*, where cultural history was seen as social-psychology; and Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) with his works on collective consciousness between 1898 and 1908, to name just three precedents, was seriously launched in the 1960s and 1970s by the French historians with the *Annales School*. It was not concerned with the narrative of events, or with politics. It did not concentrate on elites or great men,⁶ individuals, or on history from above, but on collectives and the masses, on large social groups, or large numbers of people, on group experience, collective biographies, on norms and roles, on history from below. The unique and particular was replaced with patterns and trends, change was not an issue; long term constancy was important. Social structures, relationships, and systems were studied, as well as collective behavior and collective mentalities.

What differentiates new history from traditional history is the fact that new history became interdisciplinary. It used the social sciences' methods of research, theories, laws of human behavior, concepts, hypotheses, techniques, models, quantification, statistics, comparisons, and subjects of study. Anthropology, sociology, economics, geography, demography, linguistics, and psychology fused with mainstream history to bring about a partnership of dependence and application and histories about death, childhood, madness, the climate, smells, dirt and cleanliness, gestures, the body, femininity and reading, etc.

New historians were now freed from individual, independent research. They could interpret non-literary sources like symbolic artifacts, tomb sculptures, etc., and employ collaborative, co-operative, group research.

An early example of new history's interdisciplinary nature is Fernand Braudel's total history in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*⁷ because ideas such as geo-history, the global view, and the long term gained credibility within the historical profession, even if it was slow to develop outside of France.

Originally published in three volumes in 1949,⁸ volume 1 was concerned with the relationship between humans and the environment, a time of slow unnoticed geographic structures: land, space, sea, climate, mountains, plains, shipping routes, trade, distances,

⁶ See again, Wikipedia, Great man theory, op. cit.

⁷ Braudel, op. cit.

⁸ vol. 1: *La part du milieu*, vol. 2: *Destins collectifs et mouvements d'ensemble*, vol. 3: *Les événements, la politique et les hommes*

travel, etc. and the long term, a time of relatively no change, a time of timelessness where past, present, and future meet, a time when all change is slow, a time of constant repetition, and ever recurring cycles. “Here, life was stationary, unchanging, permanent, slow moving, and history was silent, discrete, and virtually unsuspected by observers and participants.”⁹ Change was unobservable, external to thought, deep and underlying, deep beneath the surface, submerged and operating at sea depths or as deep currents and sea swells in time.

Volume 2 dealt with social relations, economics, population, language, and the medium term when change moved like the tides on top of the depths.

Volume 3 looked at great men,¹⁰ individuals, politics, wars, culture, religion, art, architecture, and the short term, a time of fast moving events. “This was the most capricious and the most notable of times, but also the most superficial, the most ephemeral, offering a spectacular but often misleading pageant.”¹¹

Interdisciplinary history was a theme of French historians at the *Annales school* for many years, and *Montaillou's* author, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, said this of his *Peasants of Languedoc*, first published in French in 1966, that it was “[a] study of the long term movements of an economy and a society—base and superstructure, material life and cultural life, sociological evolution and collective psychology, the whole within the framework of a rural world which remained very largely traditional in nature.”¹²

What *Montaillou*, and the *Peasants of Languedoc* had in common, and a recurring theme of French historians, was *mentalité*, in a word, collective mentalities. The *Annales* historians were unique in their quest to study the popular mind, how people in the past collectively yet unconsciously thought, felt, or believed about anything and everything.

However, the Anglo world was slow to take up the concept of total history, (it took 23 years before the *Mediterranean* was translated into English), and the history of collective mentalities (as the term *mentalité* was not well understood). Peter Burke commented that: “To most British historians, reared as they are in British intellectual traditions of methodological individualism, (compared to the French tradition of holism), it is obvious that there are no such things as ‘mentalités collectives’ ... There are only individuals who think.”¹³ Similarly, Gareth Stedman Jones noted in an essay, “The Pathology of English History”, that: “British historiography in the last 100 years provides a spectacular case of arrested intellectual development, and conceptual poverty.”¹⁴

The mind, so it is believed, is composed of three parts: the cognitive or thinking part, the affective or feeling part, and the volitional or behavioral part. So that, as a history of mind, the history of collective mentalities seeks to re-create “what is

⁹ Braudel op. cit. p. 20

¹⁰ See again, Wikipedia, Great man theory, op. cit.

¹¹ Braudel, op. cit vol 2 p. 903

¹² Le Roy Ladurie, E. (1969). *The Peasants of Languedoc*. Illinois: tr. John Day. (p. 289)

¹³ Burke, Peter (2015) *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929-2014*. Wiley.

¹⁴ Stedman Jones, Gareth (1967) The Pathology of English History. *New Left Review* vol. 1 no. 46

conceived and felt, the field of intelligence and affect,"¹⁵ or how people of the past perceived or construed reality.

In different words, the history of collective mentalities operates at the un-thought level: the level where the unconscious and the conscious meet; that level which is within the range of consciousness but beyond that of perception or attention—in other words, below the surface; the level of non-conscious or social unconscious; that which they took for granted or most familiar to them without realizing it; that which is outside the awareness of others or escapes the individual; that impersonal content of thought or what people think without knowing it; that level which is below the level of clear thought or clearly formulated expression; those commonly held unspoken unobservable, underlying, implicit, or instinctive assumptions.

Other (less powerful) descriptions covering the term collective mentalities are; states of mind, habits of mind, mind-sets, mental outlooks, mental horizons, mental universes, mental cosmologies, mental worlds, mental nebulae, mental picture, and world view.

Burke, in "Strengths and Weaknesses of the History of Mentalities," regards the history of mentalities as a 'historical anthropology of ideas', and a 'cultural anthropolization of history.' He continues: "My own belief is that by and by anthropology will have the choice between being history or being nothing, and that there ought to be no 'relationship' between history and anthropology, since there should be no division to begin with."¹⁶

Mentalities allowed historians to see what is 'different', 'strange', in the society being studied, how it differs from those societies which are less distant than the historian's own. It allows us 'entry' into a world with alternative hierarchies of beliefs alien to our own. It allows us access to certain 'oddities', 'absurdities', 'illogicalities', and 'irrationalities' of past minds.

To illustrate that in all periods of history people have not thought and felt in the same way, Lucien Febvre had this to say in his article, "History and Psychology":

"What does the contrast between night and day mean to us men (sic) of the twentieth century? Practically nothing at all. A switch, a movement of the arm, and sunlight gives way to electric light... But what about men of the Middle Ages? Or those of the sixteenth century? They were not masters of light... especially the poor... Their life was broken up into periods of light and darkness... according to place and season. And what about winter and summer, that is to say, cold and warmth? Winter to us means skiing... central heating... taking clothes off and relaxing. But anybody going into his house in the sixteenth century in January felt the cold hit him, the still, silent, dark cold of heatless dwellings... And the first thing a man did on getting home was not take off his overcoat but to spend on a

¹⁵ Chartier, Roger (1988) *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, tr. Lydia G. Cochran, NCROL

¹⁶ Burke, Peter (1986) Strengths and Weaknesses of the History of Mentalities. *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 7, No. 5 Elsevier Ltd. (p. 439)

great coat much warmer than the coat he wore out of doors and a lined cap far thicker than the hat he wore for going out.”¹⁷

In *The Royal Touch*,¹⁸ Marc Bloch looked at how ordinary people in medieval times could collectively believe in the power of the French and English monarchs to cure scrofula (a benign form of tuberculosis of the lymph glands especially in the neck), by simply touching them, when clearly royalty had not the power. The disease, though being subject to remissions, induced belief in the mystical, magical, power of the king's touch. This will to believe that a miracle had occurred was to last centuries (800 years, died out with royal inaction and revolution circa 1789). Compounded by poor medical knowledge, a primitive mentality, and a belief that only the king had the power of a faith healer in curing scrofula, medieval people were for centuries willingly doomed to be misled and uncured. In the medieval era, they lacked the intellectual and critical faculties with which to challenge miracles, they did not have the mental equipment to think ‘unbelief’ or be irreligious. Medieval people could not abandon the religious frame of thought of the age and society to which they belonged, any more than we can.

Wilson describes the ceremony.

“One day was set aside for queenly ceremony. Five young men were knighted, including Cecil's son Thomas (1601), and afterwards Elizabeth received nine men and women afflicted with the ‘king's evil’, scrofula. These she attempted to near drawing on the curative power believed to inhere in her as queen. The ritual was one she carried out often. First, she knelt in prayer, then, having purified herself, she ‘pressed the sores and ulcers’ of the sufferers, ‘boldly and without disgust’, confident that many of them would find the ministrations beneficial.”¹⁹

Only the monarch it seems alluded to the fact that touching was more ritual than actual miracle working on his/her part. And there was no point in telling them—belief was a much better cure than medicine.

“He was a king in Understanding, and was content to have his Subjects ignorant in many things: as in curing the *King's Evil*, which he knew a Device, to aggrandise the Virtue of Kings, when Miracles were in fashion: but he let the World believe it, though he smil'd at it in his own Reason, the Strength of the Imagination a more powerful Agent in the Cure, than the Plaisters his Chirugions prescrib'd for the Sore.”²⁰

¹⁷ Febvre, Lucien Paul Victor (1973). *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Lucien Febvre* Routledge and Kegan Paul. First published in 1938 as “Psychologie et Histoire” in *Encyclopédie française*, vol. 8 *La Vie mentale*, Paris, Société des gestion de l'Encyclopédie française

¹⁸ Bloch, Marc (1924) *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* tr. John Edward Anderson (1973), Routledge & K. Paul

¹⁹ Erickson, Carolly (1983) *The First Elizabeth* St. Martin's Griffin

²⁰ Wilson, Arthur (1653) *The History of Great Britain: being the life and reign of King James the First, relating to What passed from his first accesse to the crown till his death*. Unknown publisher.

Brian Vickers in his book, *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*²¹, said that occult mentality was part of scientific mentality, magic co-existed with reason, experiment, and mathematics. A similar claim is also to be found in Tillyard's, *The Elizabethan World Picture*.²²

Jean-Claude Schmitt, in *The Holy Greyhound*, has this to say about the occult mentality in medieval Europe:

“Around the 13th century, a knight living in the North Lyon region of France, had a greyhound dog, whose duty it was to guard a cradle and the child within it. The story continues that one day a snake attacked the infant, and the dog bit the snake to death. However, upon seeing the dog's bloody snout, the knight imagined that the dog had killed the baby and therefore slew it. As a result, the peasants of the castle environs began to worship the dog as a saint: Mothers brought sick and new born infants for healing to the tree under which the dog was buried. The idol worshipping of a dog as a saint, *St. Guinefort*, despite evidence to the contrary, (no infants were recorded as being miraculously cured), lasted until the 1930s, despite the prohibitions of the Catholic Church.”²³

Above is a brief background of traditional history verses new history and an introduction to the history of collective mentalities. So, what of collective mentalities? Do they exist in people today?²⁴

Investigation 1

To this end, I asked some co-workers (male and female, different level scientists, engineers, and laypersons the following questions relating to Marc Bloch's and J. C. Schmitt's faith healing²⁵ collective mentalities. After all, “[m]entalities probes what is common to Caesar and the least of his legionnaires, Saint Louis and the peasant who tilled his fields, Christopher Columbus and one of his mariners.”²⁶

²¹ Vickers, Brian (1984) *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* CUP.

²² Tillyard, EMW (1939) *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Random House.

²³ Schmitt, Jean-Claude (1983) *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century*, originally published in French in 1979 as *Le Saint Lévrier. Guinefort, guérisseur d'enfants depuis Le XIIIe siècle* tr. Martin Thom, CUP

²⁴ A 1997 study in Japan did in fact find a number of new Shinto religions that practice faith healing: <http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/cpjr/newreligions/igeta.html> The paper mentions H. Neill McFarland who in his book *The Rush Hour of the Gods* “notes that all of the new religions in Japan have been established with a core of healing activity, and that such faith healing forms one of the most effective means of maintaining the groups' membership.”

²⁵ Faith healing is a bit difficult to define. Often vague explanations are offered. For example, Merriam Webster defines it as “a method of treating diseases by prayer and exercise of faith in God” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/faith%20healing> retrieved July 26 2021) while the Oxford Learner's Dictionary has it as, “a method of treating a sick person through the power of belief and prayer.” (<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/faith-healing> retrieved July 26, 2021.) A bolder explanation is offered by Psychology Today: “A placebo resembles faith healing. Yet faith healing is usually considered more a matter of belief in magic and the supernatural rather than confidence in the science of pharmacology.” <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-human-beast/201103/faith-healing-shouldnt-work-it-does> (retrieved July 26, 2021.)

²⁶ Le Goff, Jacques (1974). Mentalities: A new field for historians. *Social Science Information*, 13, 81-97

The Royal Touch:

Q : People living in medieval Europe believed in faith healing. Do you think people in Japan believe in it?

A₁ : Yes, I do. I think some people still believe in it, though they are in the minority.

A₂ : No, some people do.

A₃ : (see below)

A₄ : I say no.

Q : If you said “Yes”, people still believe in faith healing, can you give a modern example?

A₁ : In Japan, there is a religious group which insists that they can heal people by putting their hands above the patients. They have 0.5-1 million followers in Japan, so roughly 0.4% of Japanese still believe in faith healing.

A₂ : In Okinawa, they have a profession called “Yuta”, which is a local shaman. There is an Okinawan proverb that says: “Half doctor, half yuta” (医者半分、ユタ半分). This indicates they believe in shamans and faith healing as well as doctors, even nowadays. Also, the word “te a te (手当)” has been used for a long time in Japan. For example, when your stomach hurts, your mother puts her hand on your stomach. After that, the child’s pain gradually subsides. I had her do it when I was a child, and I still do it for my children.

A₃ : Going to church, temple, shrine, praying, and/or making offerings ‘heal’.²⁷

A₄ : In Japan, there is a saying, Sickness and health start with the mind (病は気から.) If you strongly believe that a serious illness will be cured, it will actually be cured. However, it is not due to the power of God. It’s belief in myself.

The questions were intended to simply get students to talk about faith healing, faith (the belief or confidence in something/someone without evidence) and healing in general. The answers show that today a collective mentality exists, and like with the layman’s understanding of things like statistics or evolution, the boundaries between what makes logical sense based on our perceptions and bits of science picked up from the media are easily blurred. While creation myths have largely been replaced by a fuzzy notion of the big bang and “survival of the fittest”, faith healing is often replaced with a belief that people can somehow cure themselves through will power alone, which is itself a

²⁷ While not exactly faith healing, the curing of an illness through divine or supernatural power, a research article published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* notes: “A significant body of research suggests that religious involvement is related to better mental and physical health.” They found that: “respondents who pray less often report a greater number of depressive symptoms, and that faith, as an important source of strength in one’s daily life, is positively associated with chronic conditions such as asthma or arthritis.” (See: van Olphen J, Schulz A, Israel B, Chatters L, Klem L, Parker E, Williams D. Religious involvement, social support, and health among African-American women on the east side of Detroit. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2003 Jul;18(7):549-57. doi: 10.1046/j.1525-1497.2003.21031.x. PMID: 12848838; PMCID: PMC1494889)

kind of faith healing—faith in the supernatural power of the human mind.

Will Power

In a follow-up survey conducted using Google Forms and distributed by email to a convenience sample of contacts in Japan, a large majority of respondents agreed with the notion that people can cure themselves of sickness through will power alone. Their responses are summarized in Fig. 1.

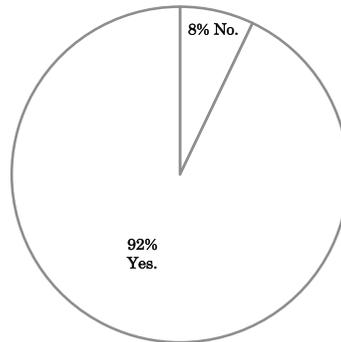


Fig. 1 People can cure themselves of illness through will power alone. N = 38

The idea is certainly very appealing. Who hasn't felt a cold coming on hoping it won't get worse and then it didn't? And certainly, the body can heal wounds and fight disease perhaps even cancer to some extent.²⁸ Like the royal touch or the holy greyhound, it is a good example of how collective mentalities form. But perhaps also like the royal touch, there is no point in telling people otherwise since the belief can be a much better cure than medicine.²⁹ At least with certain ailments.

In fact, this belief, that we can wish ourselves healthy, a kind of folk medicine,³⁰ has now replaced the traditional concept of faith healing.³¹ In the same survey, when asked directly about faith healing, respondents were divided. Their responses are summarized in Fig. 2.

²⁸ See <https://www.discovermagazine.com/health/the-body-can-beat-terminal-cancer-sometimes> and <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20150306-the-mystery-of-vanishing-cancer> (retrieved August 7, 2021)

²⁹ Acupuncture, for example, might be a better analgesic than opioids: Fan, A. Y., Miller, D. W., Bolash, B., Bauer, M., McDonald, J., Faggert, S., He, H., Li, Y. M., Matecki, A., Camardella, L., Koppelman, M. H., Stone, J., Meade, L., & Pang, J. (2017). "Acupuncture's Role in Solving the Opioid Epidemic: Evidence, Cost-Effectiveness, and Care Availability for Acupuncture as a Primary, Non-Pharmacologic Method for Pain Relief and Management-White Paper 2017". *Journal of Integrative Medicine*, 15(6), 411-425. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2095-4964\(17\)60378-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2095-4964(17)60378-9) (retrieved August 2, 2021)

³⁰ See for example, C. G. Helman, (1978) "Feed a Cold, Starve a Fever': Folk Models of Infection in an English Suburban Community, and Their Relation to Medical Treatment," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 2, pp. 107-137 in Porter, Roy (1985) *The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from below. Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 2

³¹ But like with faith healing, the danger in this idea is that we start blaming sick people for their illnesses and for not recovering: "For many people, the belief that one's mental state can heal is a comforting fantasy. But there's a dark side to wish-thinking that goes beyond pointless groin incisions, sugar pills, or drills to the cranium. If the only obstacle to perfect health is one's state of mind, then why not exhort the unfulfilled and the infirm to imagine their way to happiness and health, rather than work toward it or seek proven treatment? The door to quackery and exploitation yawns open close by." Sanghavi, Darshak (2007) "Pill Popping, Debunking the power of the placebo effect." *Slate*. <https://slate.com/technology/2007/10/debunking-the-power-of-the-placebo-effect.html> (retrieved August 2 2021.)

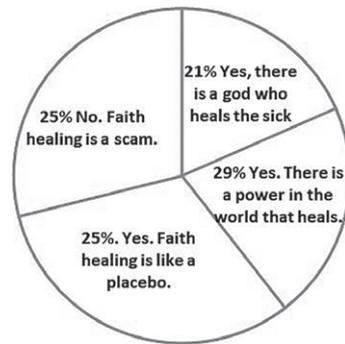


Fig. 2 Can people be cured of illness through faith? N=38

Perhaps the term “faith healing” made some respondents wary for one reason or another; people who accept the idea of curing oneself through will power may be less likely to accept the idea of divine intervention. We did not investigate the reasons for this, but unlike in times past, when people sought the help of a god to cure their illnesses, today some people think they can cure their illnesses through the power of their will.

St. Guinefort:

Q : Medieval people believed an animal can heal people. Do you think people today still believe in this?

A₁ : Yes, I do. I think some people believe in it also.

A₂ : No, some people do.

A₃ : Yes.

A₄ : Animals have the power to heal humans. I think it’s because they look beautiful and have strong loyalty. Humans feel emotional toward and around animals.

Q : If you said “Yes”, can you give a modern example?

A₁ : In animal-assisted therapy³², the instructors bring well-trained dogs or horses to hospitals, schools, nursing homes, etc., and let the patients, students, older people, or disabled people touch and pet the animals. They say that when people communicate with the animals, the stress and anxiety they have is reduced and they become relaxed.

A₂ : A modern example is the Inari shrine. The shrine’s messenger is a fox. Fox statues at the shrine often wear red bibs, in the Shinto faith, red is the color of

³² Perhaps in this answer, we can see that ordinary people are beginning to accept the idea of animal assisted therapy even though they do not understand the scientific basis for using animals to treat patients. John Hopkins, for example, is studying the effects of therapy dogs in the “Pet Partners” program: Hedin, Marin (2018) “Therapy dogs may unlock health benefits for patients in hospital ICUs” *HUB* (jhu.edu). Another study found that “Animal-assisted therapy improves cardiopulmonary pressures, neurohormone levels, and anxiety in patients hospitalized with heart failure.” See: Kathie M Cole, Anna Gawlinski, Neil Steers, Jenny Brook Kotlerman (2007) “Animal-Assisted Therapy in Patients Hospitalized With Heart Failure” *American Journal of Critical Care* 16(6) pp. 575-585. The irony is, perhaps, that while scientific evidence for the efficacy of animal assisted therapy is growing, the therapy is still seen in the minds of ordinary people as a sort of magic cure.

the gods and is said to ward off disease and malevolent energy.

A₃ : Temple with dragon's bone has power in Japan still.

A₄ : Animal therapy is famous in psychology. Dolphin therapy is drawing attention. Also, many people enjoy scuba diving because they want to get healing,³³ from sea creatures.

In Japan, there are at least traces of belief in the magical powers of nature and of animals in particular. However, it is not clear if the answers pertaining to animal-assisted therapy confuse faith healing with clinical practices that rely on psychological responses to the presence of animals. Rather than faith in a supernatural power and an actual cure, the object of using animals in a clinical environment is to help the patient feel better, “less stress and anxiety, more relaxed” in one student’s words. This is perhaps an example of how scientific explanations—in this case, the placebo effect—is misunderstood and incorrectly believed to actually bring about a cure in much the same way as medieval Europeans believed that the king had the power of a faith healer in curing scrofula.

In the same follow up survey, answers fell along similar lines as answers to questions about faith healing. The responses are summarized in Fig. 3.

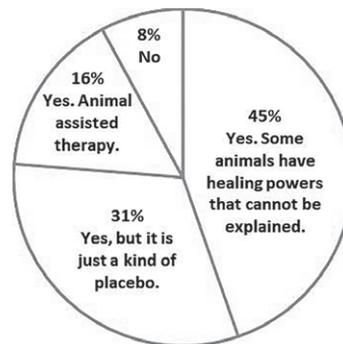


Fig. 3 Can animals cure people of disease? N=38

As with the other questions, the word cure (治す) was used intentionally. Here again, as with curing one’s illnesses through will power, people today seem more willing to accept the notion that an animal, rather than a deity, can effect a cure because science, or a mistaken notion of science, backs the idea up³⁴.

³³ The term heal is also a bit problematic as it has taken on other meanings recently, especially in Japanese English. Rather than “to fix a physical injury” (e.g. heal a wound) it often is used to mean “to heal a psychological wound” or simply “to comfort.”

³⁴ Faith in science is, of course, not the same as religious faith. An article in the Atlantic, see <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/11/why-scientific-faith-isnt-the-same-as-religious-faith/417357/> (retrieved July 24 2021), argues that while science has discovered “hidden truths” about the world, religion has not. It goes on to say, “We are sensitive to signs of agency, which explains the animism that grounds the original religions of the world. We are naturally prone to infer intelligent design when we see complex structure, which makes creationism more appealing than natural selection. We are intuitive dualists, and so the idea of an immaterial soul just makes sense—or at least more sense than the notion that our minds are the products of our physical brains.” The only difference between medieval Europeans and people today is that we connect different instances of the environment—sugar pills when medieval Europeans had none of those things—to the same old phenomenon—a change in our mental state from distress to calm and mistakenly believe that when our symptoms have been relieved, we have been cured.

Although the answers from coworkers about faith healing and the healing power of animals suggest that they share a collective mentality, one drawback of this type of analysis is that mentalities are not necessarily homogeneous, unified, classless wholes, without variations due to class, ideology, time, age, race, religion, individuality, or context, where consensus overrides conflict. This problem has afflicted the history of mentalities over the decades. World-views common to all are not autonomous of politics, economics, or social structure.

The problem came about because the history of mentalities took as one of its milestone precedents that mentalities of medieval people were ‘pre-logical’ and ‘primitive’—mental aims, sensory perceptions, and mental structures being common to all. One dominant mentality born and riding on the shoulders of the outdated pre-Lévi-Straussian evolutionist assumptions of Lévi-Bruhl.³⁵

Strong criticism of this by later historians of mentalities resulted in mentalities shifting towards the “co-existence of several conflicting mentalities at the same time, in the same period, in the same mind of one or more historical figure(s).”³⁶ This may help explain the difficulty some respondents had when answering the follow-up survey; they may have been thinking that will power can cure *some* illness like the common cold, but not others like cancer.

Investigation 2

Like the medieval village, Montailou, a university is a community of like-minded individuals. The thoughts, feelings and actions of members of this community are influenced if not determined by the environment, the people places and ideas that surround them. And although students at a university often come from diverse communities—rural, urban, wealthy, poor, religious, secular—they have chosen to enter a given university for the same reason and surely have other characteristics in common. To study how they might collectively yet unconsciously think and feel, and to discover a little of what they collectively believe and possibly predict how they will act, an accidental sample of students was asked about their beliefs and attitudes towards a range of issues from faith healing to general health advice.

Beliefs About Nursing

First, a group of second year nursing students (n=16) was asked, why do you want to become a nurse? Their answers are summarized in Fig. 4.

³⁵ Lévi-Bruhl, Lucien (1922) *Primitive Mentality* tr. Lilian A Clare (1923) London: Allen and Unwin. Lévi-Bruhl maintained that mankind had two mentalities, one primitive and one civilized. Primitive mentalities were pre-logical states of mind whilst civilized mentalities were logical states of mind. Primitive mentalities resembled childlike thought and was a collective phenomenon within which no individual behavior could be discerned. Unfortunately, while Lévi-Bruhl changed his mind later in life denouncing his evolutionist stages, other historians did not. Historians took it that medieval Europeans had a primitive mode of thought collectively.

³⁶ Le Goff, Jacques (1985) “Mentalities: A History of Ambiguities”, in J. Le Goff and P. Nora, eds., *Constructing the Past*, Cambridge (p. 66).



Fig. 4 Why do you want to become a nurse? N=16

Many students also said that they had become interested in nursing because of experiences they have had with nurses, either a parent was a nurse and they admired that parent or they had spent some time in a hospital and were impressed by the nurses they met there.

Not surprisingly, there was complete agreement among the students about what nurses do. All 16 agreed that nurses mainly help patients rather than doctors and that rather than solve problems, nurses improve the patient's quality of life. Asked to elaborate, all of them mentioned the need to communicate well with patients (rather than doctors) and earn their trust.

On the other hand, the students were almost evenly divided over the question, what is nursing? The responses are summarized in Fig. 5.

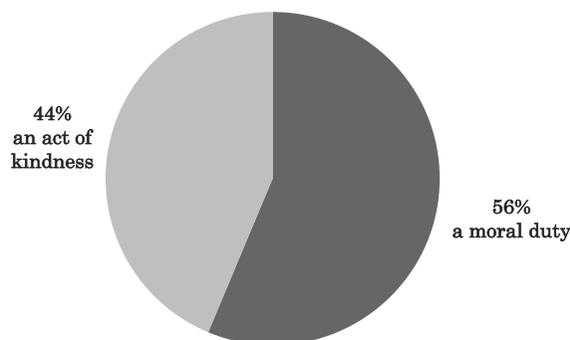


Fig. 5 What is nursing? N=16

In their responses to the question, why do you want to become a nurse, students often mentioned that they want to become a compassionate nurse and ethical considerations (good Samaritan laws, for example³⁷) were never directly stated,

³⁷ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Samaritan_law (retrieved August 11, 2021 "In Germany, failure to provide first aid to a person in need is punishable under § 323c of its criminal penal code."

although many of them did say that nursing is a job worth doing. To further clarify, they were asked to choose between expertise and compassion. Almost all of them chose objectivity and expertise over compassion and kindness (88% compared to 12%) as the most important traits needed to be a good nurse.

Finally, students were asked what they expect will be the best part and the hardest part about nursing. Answers regarding the best part ranged from being able to communicate with patients, seeing the patient smile, receiving thanks from the patient, watching the patient improve to discharging the patient, the sorts of responses we would expect. Similarly, these students realize the serious nature of their chosen career path and expect the job to have its difficulties. Among their major concerns are being able to communicate well with patients and understand their feelings. And lastly, of course, they know they will have to deal with death.

Modern Beliefs

Although we share some of the same health concerns as medieval villagers, we also have other concerns, and new beliefs about health have spread through the media and our recent collective experiences.

A different group of students was asked: in regards to COVID-19, what is the main purpose of wearing a mask? Their answers are summarized in Fig. 6.

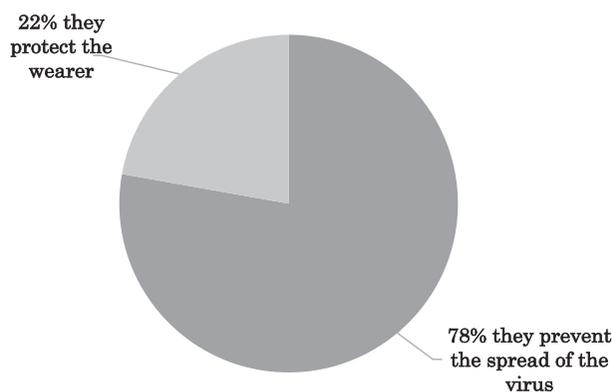


Fig. 6 What is the main reason for wearing a face mask during the current pandemic? N=13

The sometimes confusing messages coming from the media and government³⁸ do not always make clear why we should be wearing masks, but in Japan where there is a long tradition of mask wearing during cold season, many students seem to understand

³⁸ See for example <https://www.forbes.com/sites/anandamitra/2020/05/27/the-virus-masks-confusion/?sh=3e8bb6113d70> (retrieved August 11, 2021) On the other hand, the message in Japan has been much more consistent, which is perhaps reflected in the survey results.

that if they catch a cold it is the polite thing to do.³⁹ Nonetheless, the idea that you should wear a mask when you feel sick so that you do not spread it to other people is perhaps being eroded by the idea that you need to protect yourself from the virus by wearing a mask.

Beliefs Specific to Japan

In Investigation 1, answers suggested that common mentalities have spread because of a shared culture. While many Japanese consider themselves areligious, there still exists in Japan a belief in the power of amulets (御守り) purchased at Shinto shrines. Nearly half of respondents in yet another accidental sampling of students said that buying an amulet at a Shinto shrine will ensure health.

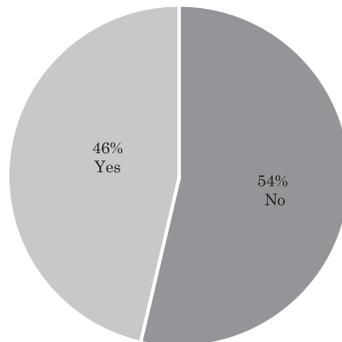


Fig. 7 Buying an amulet at a Shinto shrine will ensure health. N=28

In Fig. 7, we can see that nearly half of respondents believe in the power of amulets. As with the belief that we can wish ourselves healthy, trusting amulets to keep us healthy can be easily understood. They can give us confidence: “if you do something once, and it works, you should keep doing it to see if it brings good luck.”⁴⁰ However, beliefs impact our actions, and over-confidence in amulets, especially in the age of COVID-19, can be dangerous. Beliefs have costs as well as benefits. One example apropos to this paper and concerning hospitals in Japan is the belief in 仏滅 (butsumetsu.) A study published in the BMJ (British Medical Journal) by Fukui, Endoh, Rahman and Maekawa in 1998 concluded that:

³⁹ See for example: The American Lung Association, “The reason for wearing a facial covering is to help protect others from you when you cough, sneeze or even talk and spray viral droplets into the air. Many people who become infected can unknowingly spread the COVID-19 virus because they have few or no symptoms. So wearing a mask is showing respect for others and is your way of helping lessen the spread of the disease.” <https://www.lung.org/blog/covid-masks> (retrieved September 20, 2021)

⁴⁰ Threewitt, Cherise (undated) <https://auto.howstuffworks.com/auto-racing/motorsports/10-superstitions-from-the-world-of-motor-racing.htm> (retrieved August 15, 2021)

“Belief in Taian-Butsumetsu certainly influences the decision to leave hospital. The superstition related behaviours of patients cause financial and complex psychosocial problems. Although the costs of unnecessarily extended hospital stay are appreciable, no data exist on the psychological impact of the superstition. Doctors should explain drawbacks of unnecessarily extending hospital stay to the patients while taking into consideration the possible psychological impact of the superstition on health.”⁴¹

Most students in a group of first year nursing students, when asked whether patients should be released from hospital on 仏滅, recognized it as an unlucky day (79% N=28). While many of the answers indicated a recognition of the belief as a part of Japanese culture, it was not clear from the other responses whether the respondent actually believes it themselves. On the other hand, six or roughly 20% said clearly that it is a meaningless superstition. Surprisingly, six students or 20% had no idea about it with one claiming to have never heard of it.

There are many other such mentalities that are collectively shared, for example sleeping with one’s head to the north and a belief that blood type influences personality that have been largely debunked (most students are divided 70–75% disbelieving compared to 24–30% who believe.) How beliefs affect patient/caregiver interactions should be taken into more consideration, and by raising awareness about beliefs including one’s own will help us better understand the choices we make⁴². Certainly, it is a topic that deserves as much attention as the traditional study of culture⁴³ and deserves more careful attention than allowed for in these casual investigations.

One final example, summarized in Fig. 8, is the persistent belief that wearing warm clothes will protect you from catching the cold virus. There are many good reasons for believing this as has been discussed elsewhere⁴⁴, but it seems to ignore the real cause of the common cold.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Hira K, Fukui T, Endoh A, Rahman M, Maekawa M. Influence of superstition on the date of hospital discharge and medical cost in Japan: retrospective and descriptive study. *BMJ*. 1998 Dec 19–26;317(7174):1680–3. doi: 10.1136/bmj.317.7174.1680. PMID: 9857123; PMCID: PMC28746.

⁴² See Wang Q. (2016). Why Should We All Be Cultural Psychologists? Lessons from the Study of Social Cognition. *Perspectives on psychological science: a journal of the Association for Psychological Science*, 11(5), 583–596. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616645552> (retrieved August 12, 2021)

⁴³ Forbes magazine describes the importance of studying food culture. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/thehartmangroup/2017/01/27/why-study-culture/?sh=2c1f19f26bbd> (retrieved August 12, 2021) Certainly, the way healthcare is provided is at least as important as the way meals are shared.

⁴⁴ According to the BBC, one reason we might catch cold more easily in winter “...is that because when you’re feeling cold the blood vessels in the nose and throat constrict, meaning that fewer infection-fighting white blood cells reach your nose and throat to tackle the virus.” Another is “...that people simply get more colds in winter because they stay inside together and pass their germs around more easily. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190204-5-myths-about-staying-warm-in-cold-weather> retrieved August 8, 2021

⁴⁵ The NIH, for example, explains “Rhinoviruses and a few other cold-causing viruses seem to survive best in cooler weather. Their numbers surge in September and begin to dwindle in May.” (<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2012/06/catching-cold-when-its-warm> retrieved August 8, 2021. See also <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/flu-virus-fortified-colder-weather>, retrieved August 8, 2021) So, the association between cold weather and colds is very strong.

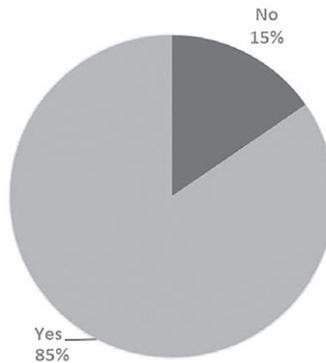


Fig. 8 We catch a cold when we get cold. (N = 13)

While this might be another common sense idea held around the world, there is also reason to believe that in East Asia, it also has a cultural component. According to an article in *Prevention* magazine, “Frigophobia is the fear of being cold. It may be especially common within Chinese culture because the Eastern philosophical principles of yin and yang hold that cold exposure is associated with heart ache (sic), stomachache and illness, as well as a loss of vitality.”⁴⁶ Similarly, many respondents also believe that using a fan at night in summer or allowing your stomach to be exposed will cause illness.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Faith healing continues to be popular. While for some of us, belief in faith healing and the power of things like amulets or a patient’s ability to cure themselves of illness through will power alone might not seem grounded in reality, a US Department of Health and Human Services report found that in 2012 over 38% of US adults used complimentary health approaches to treat illnesses. The study notes that “U.S. adults spend between \$27 and \$34 billion in out-of-pocket expenditures per year on complementary health approaches.”⁴⁸ Outside of the cost, a WebMD article argues that things like crystals when used to boost confidence, Reiki to reduce stress, and magnetized bracelets to reduce pain can have a positive psychological effect and usually do little harm.⁴⁹ Particularly with pain relief, the article cites studies that support their effectiveness: “Brain imaging studies have shown that when a patient performs an action, such as taking a sugar pill or getting a sham acupuncture session, it activates very specific regions in the brain and can trigger the release of feel-good hormones

⁴⁶ See: <https://www.prevention.com/health/mental-health/g20158616/weird-phobias/?slide=27> (retrieved August 8, 2021.) See also <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frigophobia> (retrieved August 8, 2021)

⁴⁷ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fan_death (retrieved August 8, 2021)

⁴⁸ Nahin RL, Barnes PM, Stussman BJ. “Expenditures on complementary health approaches: United States, 2012”. National Health Statistics Reports. PDF Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2016.

⁴⁹ WebMD.com “Can Crystals Heal? Separating Facets from Facts” By Lisa Marshall <https://www.webmd.com/balance/news/20180116/can-crystals-heal-separating-facets-from-facts> (retrieved August 2, 2021)

like endorphins, dopamine, and natural painkillers.” The article also cautions, however, that placebos are not a cure for an illness; they only relieve symptoms. Unfortunately, many take this a step further and believe that placebos can, as an article in *Slate* magazine puts it, “...trigger healing on their own.” The article goes on to say, “For too long, medical science has accepted the magical thinking that patients’ beliefs could activate dying neurons, heal knee cartilage, prevent air bubbles from traveling through the heart to cause migraines, lower bad cholesterol, and even cure cancer and AIDS.”⁵⁰

One reason for the continued belief in faith healing and the reliance on magical thinking is that we cannot abandon the frame of thought of our age and the societies in which we live⁵¹. As in the past, many people today lack the intellectual and critical faculties with which to challenge the unexplainable, we do not have the mental equipment to analyze, to question or reason systematically. Many of us cannot abandon the ideas and traditions we grew up with⁵², the superstitions and memes that form our thoughts and define the age and society to which we belong any more than medieval Europeans could.

So, the belief in magical cures is nothing new. As we saw in the background and investigations above, people everywhere want to believe that there are simple and easy cures for their illnesses⁵³. However, belief in what is curative changes. During different periods of history and in different places, people have not thought and felt the same way. Despite an apparent increase in scientific knowledge and understanding, ideas come in and out of fashion, new ways of thinking get mixed with old ways of thinking, etc. Take for example, again, the concept of healing, now often used, especially in Japanese English (ヒーリング) to mean “to heal a psychological wound, to make feel better or relieve from stress” that then gets conflated with the idea of “to cure”. Or look at how the relatively recent understanding of the placebo effect, the power of which is sometimes misunderstood and misused today.

In years past, all anyone ever had was belief. And even now, belief is all we have. If our beliefs do no harm, we can simply enjoy the diversity of human imagination.

⁵⁰ Sanghavi, Darshak (2007) “Pill Popping, Debunking the power of the placebo effect.” *Slate*.: <https://slate.com/technology/2007/10/debunking-the-power-of-the-placebo-effect.html>

⁵¹ Sam Harris, for example, argues in his book *Free Will* (2012) that free will is an illusion. However, psychologists have found that it is probably best to act as if we do have free will. (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/06/theres-no-such-thing-as-free-will/480750/> retrieved July 28 2021) In any case, if free will is an illusion, (the writers of this paper believe it is), then belief in it is an example of a mentality that is common to many people in many cultures around the world.

⁵² Chicken soup is comforting even if only a palliative and not a cure for the common cold. Although see: Saketkhoo, K., Januszkievicz, A., & Sackner, M. A. (1978). Effects of drinking hot water, cold water, and chicken soup on nasal mucus velocity and nasal airflow resistance. *Chest*, 74(4), 408-410. <https://doi.org/10.1378/chest.74.4.408> (retrieved August 13, 2021)

⁵³ If only we could cure an *h. pylori* infection simply by eating a special kind of yogurt, wouldn't that be nice. See: Goderska, K., Agudo Pena, S., & Alarcon, T. (2018). *Helicobacter pylori* treatment: antibiotics or probiotics. *Applied microbiology and biotechnology*, 102(1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00253-017-8535-7>. But see also: Vinay Prasad, Andrae Vandross, Caitlin Toomey, et al. (2013) “A Decade of Reversal: An Analysis of 146 Contradicted Medical Practices,” *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* vol.88, 8, pp. 790-798 DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2013.05.012>

On the other hand, if they affect healthcare choices in a critical way, as has happened with superstitions around butsumetsu in Japan, they need to be examined carefully. Future research, then, might focus on how beliefs, both those held by patients and by caregivers, affect healthcare.

Finally, this study has suggested what collective mentalities exist today. And just as the study of mentalities has deepened our understanding of the past, has broadened mainstream history with new fields of study hitherto unexplored or never before treated seriously, we hope to have shown that mentalities can deepen our understanding of how people today think. It is a subject that should be taken into more consideration to broaden mainstream education and help clarify values. It deserves a more formal and deliberate exploration than allowed for in our investigations here.