

# The Magic of Social Life

Brian Rappert



## Abstract:

In this event I want to recount a bit about a four-year study I undertook to learn and perform entertainment magic that culminated in a recently published book titled *Performing Deception*. Ta-da...In the tradition of self-studies, I used my immersion into an activity as a novice as a basis for considering how practical reasoning and embodied skills were acquired. Through recounting some vignettes of my experiences, I will address questions such as: How are magicians and audiences bound together in relations of interdependence and deception? How do magicians fashion autobiographies such that they can hold together evidence of their genuineness with evidence of their ability to mislead? How do magicians get trained to act 'naturally'? In doing so, I hope to elaborate how learning magic engenders a sense of moving closer to and away from appreciating the experiences of others as well as one's self.





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# Magic, secrecy and lies

## The Magic of Everyday

Join with me in a highly interactive performance of trickery and illusion. We will use the play of secrecy, disclosure and deception in magic to discuss the role of secrecy, disclosure and deception in art, science, war, and daily life. I hope to promote a renewed spirit of curiosity and wonder about how we manage to live together in the world today...

Running time: 90 minutes  
Suitable for those 15 years+

Brian Rappert is a Professor of Science, Technology and Public Affairs in the Department of Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology at the University of Exeter.



UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

## THE MAGIC OF SOCIAL LIFE



THIS EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE BYRNE HOUSE SEMINAR ROOM ON THE 20TH AND 27TH SEPTEMBER FROM 5PM - 6.15PM.

Join with Professor Brian Rappert for a highly interactive event that uses entertainment magic to explore themes about how we live together. We will use the play of secrecy, disclosure and deception in magic to discuss the role of secrecy, disclosure and deception in art, science, war, and daily life.

# Magical Deceptions

Join with me in a latest interactive performance of trickery. We will use the play of secrecy, disclosure and deception in magic to discuss the role of secrecy, disclosure and deception in art, science, war, and daily life. I hope to promote a spirit of curiosity and wonder about how we manage to live together in the world today...

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His books include *The Dis-eases of Secrecy*, *How to Look Good in a War*, and *Experimental Secrecy*.



Numbers limited to twelve to ensure a more hands-on experience

We will be holding a series of these events on a Sunday afternoon - check out the listing on Facebook at @ashburtonarts

For further info contact: [brappert@googlemail.com](mailto:brappert@googlemail.com)  
All proceeds go to Ashburton Arts

Cost £10/£8/£5  
You choose

Tickets: Available from RedKID Cafe, the Information Centre, [www.gettickets.com/ashburtonarts](http://www.gettickets.com/ashburtonarts) or the door; reserve at [bookoffice@ashburtonarts.org.uk](mailto:bookoffice@ashburtonarts.org.uk)



## MAGIC IN AN AGE OF PRETENCE



# Front Room Phoenix

Sun 24 May & Sun 31 May | 8pm | 18+ | Pay What You Decide

# PERFORMING DECEPTION

LEARNING, SKILL AND THE ART OF CONJURING

BRIAN RAPPERT

*Brian Rappert provides a wonderful reflective and academic account of his journey towards mastering the art of magic. Performing Deception also teaches us a lot about the inner workings of this secretive artform and the communities that produce it. This book will be of interest to anyone who would like to learn more about the mysteries of perception, deception and secrecy.*

- Dr Gustav Kuhn, Goldsmiths, University of London

In *Performing Deception*, Brian Rappert reconstructs the practice of entertainment magic by analysing it through the lens of perception, deception and learning, as he goes about studying conjuring himself.

Through this novel meditation on reasoning and skill, Rappert elevates magic from the undertaking of mere trickery to an art that offers the basis for rethinking our possibilities for acting in the modern world.

*Performing Deception* covers a wide range of theories in sociology, philosophy, psychology and elsewhere in order to offer a striking assessment of the way secrecy and deception are woven into social interactions, as well as the illusionary and paradoxical status of expertise.

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BRIAN RAPPERT

PERFORMING DECEPTION

# PERFORMING DECEPTION

LEARNING, SKILL  
AND THE ART OF  
CONJURING

BRIAN RAPPERT



OpenBook  
Publishers 



# Appreciating Doubleness



Introduction  
03:48

Patrons, Focus, Movements   
32:36

Peripheral View   
16:52

Modifying Patterns (Suits-Colors)   
28:20

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 Class Sta

 Tutoring a  
Tutoring Exp

▼ Lesson 3

● Process ●

**MARKS AND CHAPTER**  
This video has no markers yet.

**NOTES**  
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‘... the moral here as elsewhere is that magicians generally are *less perceptive* audiences than laypeople and an unreliable guide as to what constitutes strong magic.’

- Darwin Ortiz  
*Strong Magic*

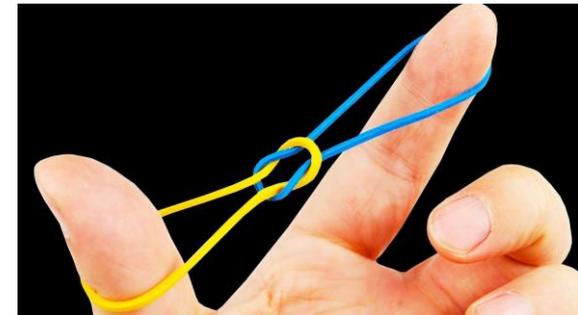
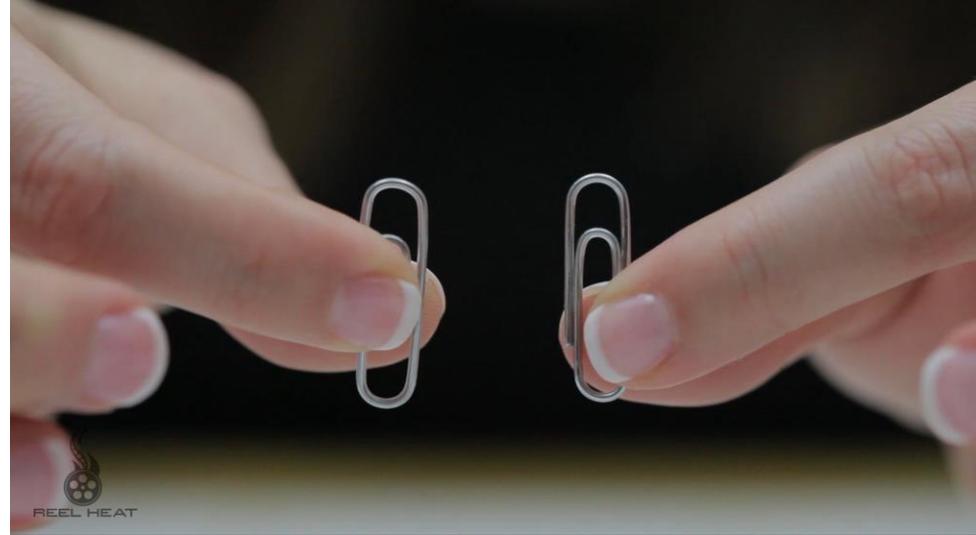
‘We don’t keep secrets *from* the audience,  
we keep secrets *for* the audience.’

- Michael Weber

‘Always remain in control.’

- Darwin Ortiz  
*Strong Magic*

# Care(ful) Objects



**A Kind of Magic**

# Magic as...

...magic: Sincere

...trickery: Ironic

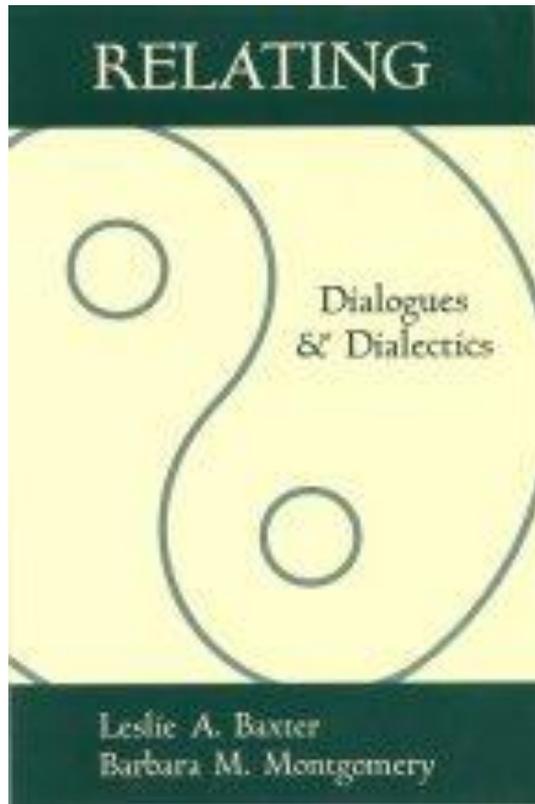
...revelation: Exposing

...‘meta-theatre’: Self-referential

...method: Reflexively constituted

- focus group

- topicalising our actions and non-actions



Magic as entailing  
opposing but yet co-  
existing tendencies  
and features

Learning/Unlearning

Self/Other

Control/Cooperation

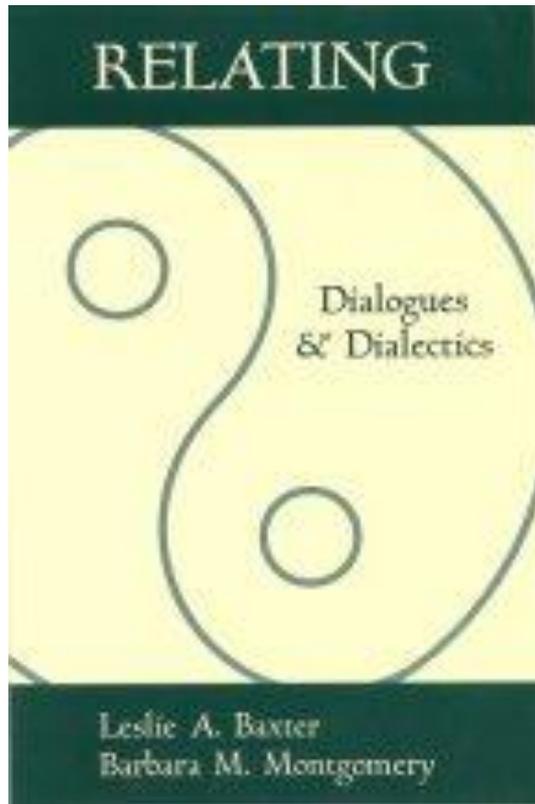
Natural/Artificial

Proficiency/Incapability

Truth/Deception

Control/Care





Magic as entailing  
opposing but yet co-  
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Learning/Unlearning

Self/Other

Control/Cooperation

Natural/Artificial

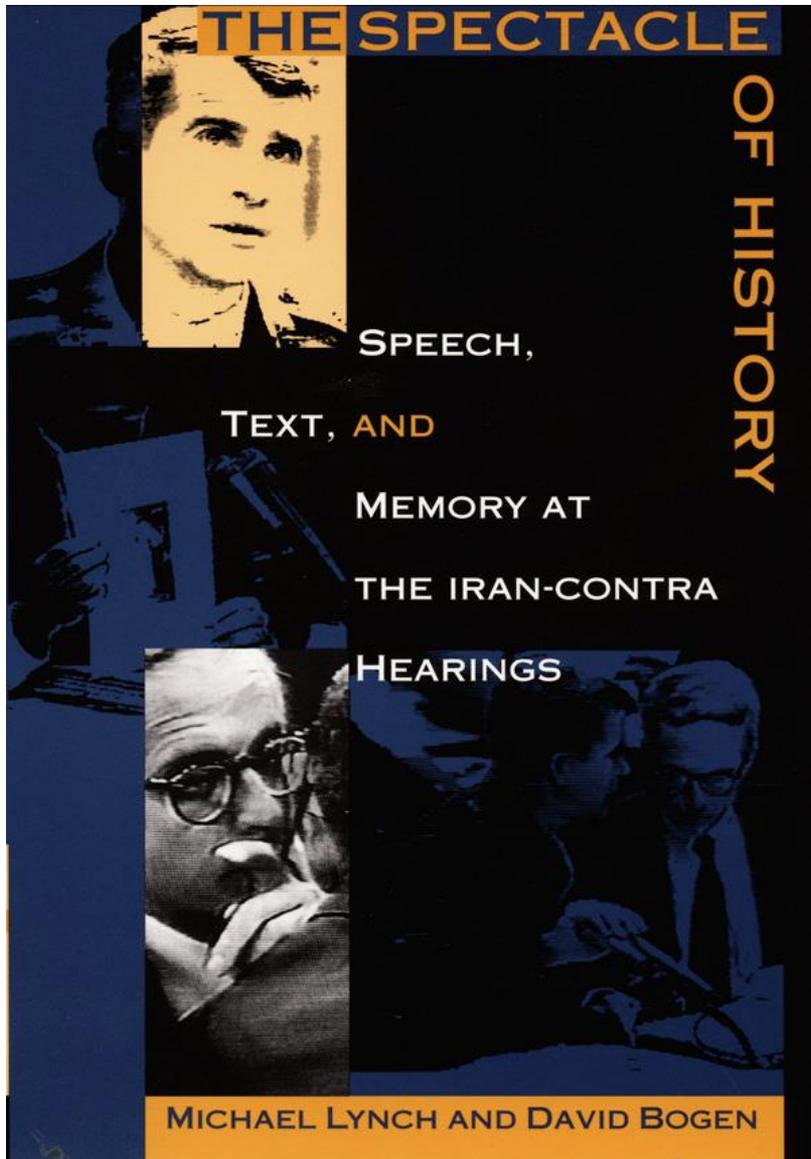
Proficiency/Incapability

Truth/Deception

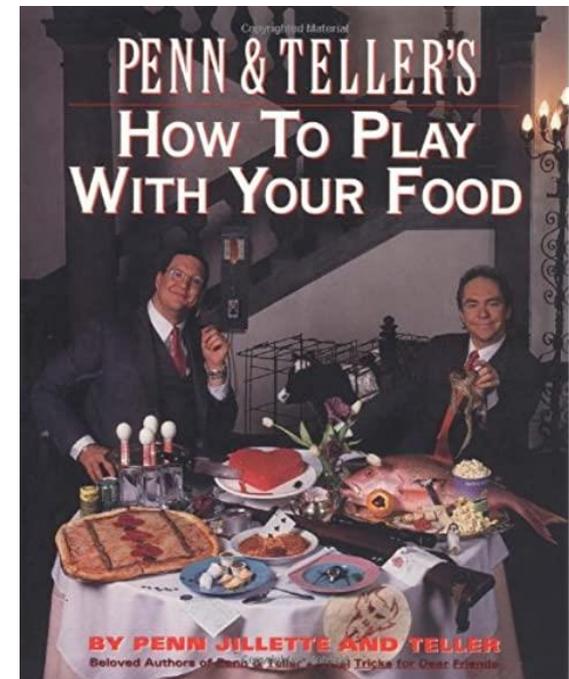
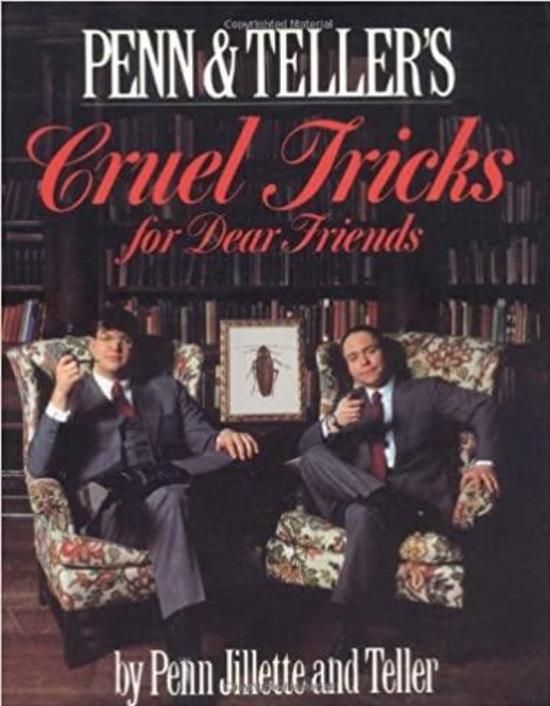
Control/Care

# Truth/Deception

- \* How do magicians fashion autobiographies such that they can hold together evidence of their genuineness with evidence of their ability to mislead?
- \* What importance do authors themselves invest in their accounts being truthful?
- \* How do conjurers advance notions of right and wrong even as they recount their skill in deceiving?

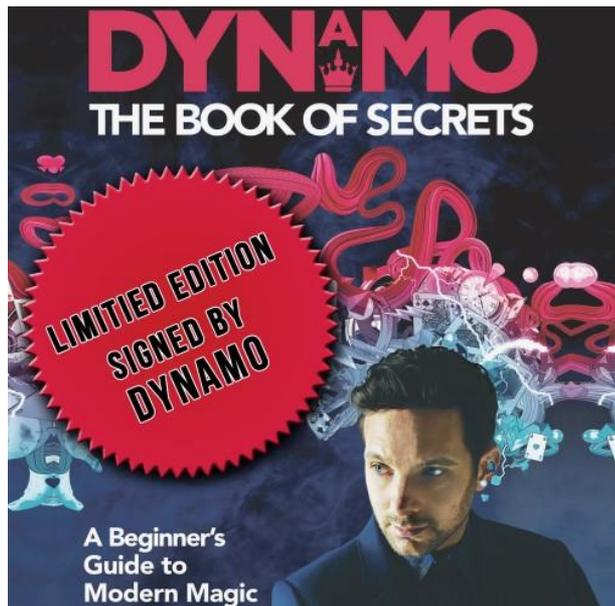


1. Lying is justified to prevent our adversaries from knowing our secrets.
2. Our adversaries have access to this very testimony.
3. I am not now lying.  
*And I really mean it, honest!*



1. Lying is justified to suckers that don't understand tricks.
2. You bought our book because you didn't know how to do tricks.
3. We are not now lying to you. *And we might not mean it, really!*





## INTRODUCTION

Every effect I perform begins as a dream – an impossible idea that I can see in my mind's eye. Those dreams become my sketches and words in books like the one you're holding. This journal is, quite literally, where my magic meets reality. The very best of these ideas get developed into some of the effects you might see me do on television and on stage. Even the biggest stunts begin on pages like this one.

For this project, I've created a book that I hope will inspire you to practise and perform magic. I have shared 30 powerful effects, and if you read between the lines, there are even more secrets to uncover.

I have purposely chosen effects that are powerful but entirely easy to do. Nothing in this book requires years of work (although the more you put in, the more you'll get out), and you won't get blisters from practising these effects (that has happened to me many times over the last 15 years). Instead, I have chosen magic that will intrigue audiences and allow you to focus on the most important part of a magic show: the presentation.

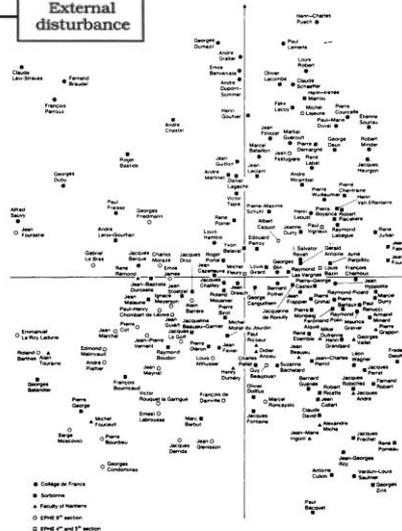
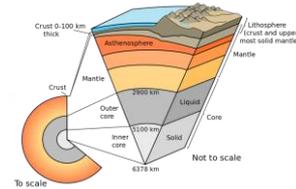
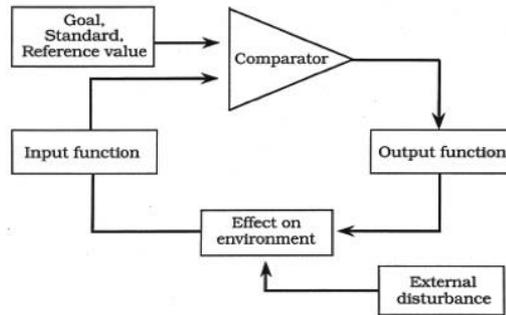
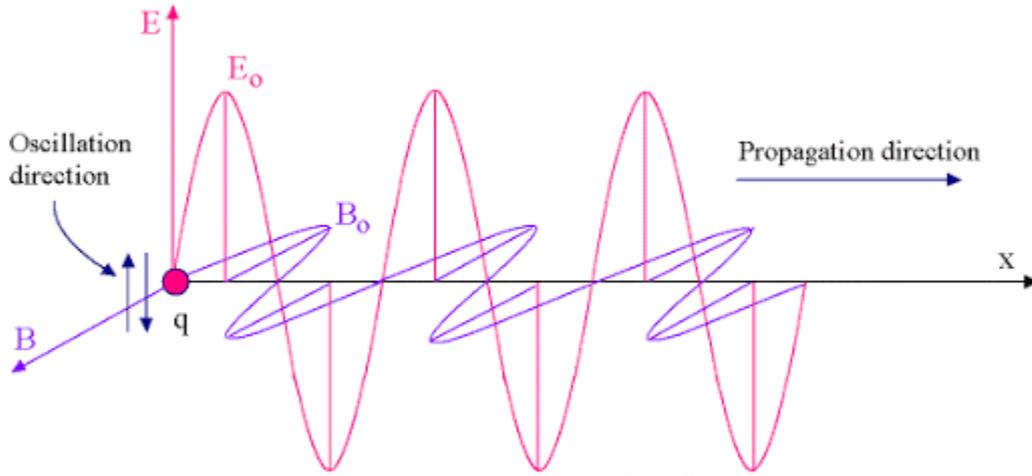
Don't be fooled by my casual style on stage and on camera. What I say is as calculated as what I do. That's why I have provided detailed instruction not only on how each effect works, but the script for each one, and how to prepare in advance for every effect. You'll learn how to make a borrowed ring move without touching it. You'll be able to look through someone's body. I'll show you how to predict the future and know the decisions someone will make before they know. You'll be able to make a chosen card vanish from the deck and appear in your shoe. And later in this book you'll even learn a way to perform a piece of magic on someone with me; I'll actually be there to help you do the magic.

I've also provided the kind of helpful advice I wish someone would have whispered to me when I began – how to cope with nerves, what to do about hecklers, how to put together a show and more. This is exactly the resource I wish I had when I was starting in magic.

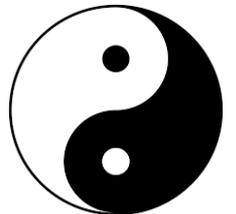
Reading someone's book of secrets is like stepping inside their head... so, welcome to my mind.

London, June 2017

*I'm serious about this*



Graph 7 The space of the arts and social science faculties: analysis of correspondences: plane of the first and second axes of inertia - individuals



**Thanks**