

The Morals of Magic

Magic is base, wicked trickery according to the phone in host on LBC radio. Well there must be a down to earth reason for the up in the air miracles, but we are interested in the up in the air miracles, not how it is done and they are amoral, they don't do any harm at all. When I produce flowers as a magician, in my hands, there are gasps of astonishment. Is this amoral? No not at all!

Artistic licence, if it was immoral to lie and pretend that would be the end of West End Theatre and all of the theatres would be closed down. Artistic amorality is the order of the day so we can sin and be forgiven in the same breath. We must make the distinction between magic and miracles....



Magic contains a secret which explains the technical side, think about a magical effect and then decide how it is to be done. This is a technical skill which inspires great admiration, we can call magic miraculous but Christ's miracles actually did extend the laws of nature, his miracles were miracles. Water into rich full bodied wine was a miracle indeed and how 5000 people could be fed by a few loaves and fishes was another much needed miracle. Base trickery far from it!

I am so swamped by the secret that I am terrified of giving the game away. How can they possibly not see through it and yet the secret always remains hidden and my fears are in vain. Tommy Cooper let the cat out of the bag to hilarious effect but that is one side of the coin, the Magician must believe in the effect not the secret. And his patter should enhance the effect up to the hilt. Paul Daniels says he can reproduce Jesus's absolutely and completely, though I don't think he can raise people from the dead without enormous trickery. In any case, Jesus was in league with his father God and these amazing feats were perfectly possible under the hand of the almighty. There is plenty of magic in nature: how a body heals in time is a miracle in itself, it does and we marvel. It is taking things for granted which takes the fun out of magic, perhaps we should all wonder a bit more and assume a bit less.

The Latin word miraculum means literally something to wonder at. Caterpillar into butterfly is a miraculum. A cure for many cancers was a miraculum. Speaking clearly after a stroke is a miracle indeed. The secret may be very boring and scientific; it is the magical effect that counts. We can say Man the Magical Inventor can only go so far but I am a firm believer in more than that. I believe man is a creature of God man do God's will, even if he is an atheist. Magic is the impossible made possible, apparently possible. With our Lord it was not apparently at all, it actually happened according to the scriptures. With the humble 21st century Magician it has to be apparent. But before your very eyes! Who can doubt the evidence of their senses, you had better if you are in front of THE GREAT SPIFFLICO!

Share all your secrets and get on with the show. Of course the Magician is always satisfied with that. He will apparently reveal the secret and in so doing will conceal it with a red herring. It is all in the art of entertainment, not morals. When the villain is gunned down they make absolutely sure that his body does not move. Not because the effect is false but to entertain you. It may even persuade you

that villainy doesn't pay. It is the street corner Johnnies who give magic a bad name. It looks cheap and nasty and the magic is savage and challenging. We can do better than that. And a three card trick can be highly immoral where a lot of money is involved, whereas a tree going through the season can be absolutely delightful reproduced in a theatre, all you have to do is to think of a magical effect first. Something that will make the audience gasp! Write it down and be amazed yourself. Then use the countless gimmicks at your disposal to realise it.

Write that down too! Send it off and earn a fortune for your creditors. You have not earned that money immorally even though deception is central to the whole theme. There is no point to deception but to cheer people up. That is why I don't like circular saws going through bodies. I suppose the relief that the body is unharmed is the great pay off. Although it is tagged off at the end as an afterthought.

Magic is therapeutic it does you good. It does the Magician good as well as the audience. And the sky is the limit, it only takes a little ingenuity to think of a really good magic effect and as an exercise in ingenuity, it should challenge us all.

Put your magical thinking cap on and get going!!!

Richard Jameson



101 years ago...

In our third and final dip into Cecil H. Bullivant's *The Drawing Room Entertainer*, published in 1906, here's a brilliant self working trick to amaze your family and friends.

Which Number was Struck Out?

Ask any one to write on a piece of paper a number of several figures, then to subtract from that number the sum of its digits; next, from the number thus obtained to strike out any digit, and to write the remaining digits down again in any order. On the new number being handed to the performer he will state correctly the figure struck out. Of course, as I have stated the trick here it does not present much of an appearance, but worked with "suitable patter" it forms a very good feat in divination.

Let us imagine the first number written down was-

	62857
Sum of digits	28

By subtraction	62829
Strike out any figure, e.g. 8	6229 are the figures remaining.

Written down in different order 2692

By adding these together the performer finds they come to 19. The figure struck out will be the difference between 19 and the next higher multiple of 9, which is 27; this difference is 8, therefore 8 was the figure struck out.