



Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170,

Assembly #99

“The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring”

Chances are you’ve heard of the concept of ‘equivoque’ in magic. It is a major part of Max Maven’s B’Wave (His Four Queens effect).

In a nutshell, it’s the performer’s ability to structure questions and instructions in an open-ended and ambiguous way that they later can interpret in the way most favorable to the performer.

That’s a mouthful, so here’s another example:

I place three objects on the table and ask you to pick up two. Let’s say I want to force the middle object. If you pick up the outer objects, I will tell you to give them to me,

leaving the middle object the only one in play. If you pick up the middle and one of the outer objects, I ask you to hand me one of the objects. If you hand me the non-force object, I discard it as I did the first two and leave you with the force object. If you hand me the force object, I treat that as you selecting and giving me your selection. Either way the desired item is forced.

This is a basic example of equivoque can be found in Annemann, although it's hard to say if it originated with him. I still like to credit him with popularizing it.

It's a technique as old as time, and what's interesting is that the word 'equivoque' generally means nothing to people unless they're into magic.

In fact, the first time those of you who are not into mentalism probably heard the word 'equivoque' is in the context of magic.

For our mental magic to have maximum impact we want the choices made to FEEL unequivocal, even if they aren't.

It's one thing to have a spectator give you an object which you've predicted, and for the spectator to think to themselves "Well, it was a bit confusing, but I suppose I did choose that" and another entirely for the spectator to think "I freely and definitely chose that object."

I feel like when equivoque is used wrongly, a routine can work on paper but just not feel special. In one way or another, the spectator feels they've been 'tricked' into whatever outcome they've landed on, even though they can't prove that or point out how.

I once had a magician employ a very popular equivoque subtlety on me to force something. I ended up in a bizarre situation where I confessed to them after that I had felt a bit confused and controlled during that section, and it didn't really feel like I'd made the choice. The magician then proceeded to explain to me why I was wrong and why the subtlety is actually very convincing.

“Yeah, that’s all great on paper.” I thought. “But I’m just telling you how it felt to me as a spectator.”

I’m aware that I probably know more about the whole thing than a regular audience, but I also couldn’t shake the feeling that it maybe just wasn’t as clean as everyone was saying it was.

I’m certainly not disparaging equivoque as a technique. I use it myself. I just think it’s something we should put more thought and care into than we often do. We often just assume that because spectators don’t understand it, it’ll be fooling. But I think we should spend less time on figuring out how to give spectators a choice that’s equivocal and more time about how to make any choice they make feel UNEquivocal.

A simple start is simply to give them the option to change their mind after moving them to the outcome we want. It introduces a small trade-off in the sense that some may take you up on it, but in return it helps solidify what may have felt like an uncertain choice into something certain.

Or, like Peter Turner often does—give the spectators instructions and then add things like “but you can do whatever, it doesn’t matter”, knowing full well that they’ve already started following the initial instructions.

I’ll end with a quote from Annemann, the very magician who came up with the procedure outlined above, who once said, “audiences are far from being as dumb as performers seem to think.”

A tribute to Theodore Annemann

<https://youtu.be/RGxXGI4vsDA>



The Greatest Mentalist Who Ever Lived - Theodore Annemann

The classic X Ray Deck. An oldie but goodie.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0tuZF7ZWMY&t=186s>



X-Ray Deck



Doug Henning stepped onto the stage in the 1970s and chose to make magic feel joyful and open—even when traditional magicians often relied on mystery, distance, and formality.

To audiences, Doug Henning became a revolutionary figure in modern magic. But behind the colorful costumes and enthusiastic smile was a performer who reshaped how illusion was presented.

His breakthrough came with the Broadway production *The Magic Show*, which brought magic into a theatrical setting and introduced it to a wider, mainstream audience. The show's success helped launch Henning into international fame.

Unlike many magicians before him, Henning embraced a vibrant, almost countercultural style—long hair, bright outfits, and an approachable personality. He often expressed genuine wonder during his own tricks, inviting the audience to share in the experience rather than keeping them at a distance.

He later brought magic to television with a series of highly rated specials, making illusion accessible to millions of viewers at home. These specials helped revive interest in magic during a time when it had begun to fade from mainstream entertainment. Henning's approach focused less on secrecy and more on amazement. He wanted audiences to feel the joy of the impossible, rather than just question how it was done.

His influence can be seen in later magicians who combined performance, storytelling, and personality into their acts.

Doug Henning didn't just perform tricks—he reimaged the experience of magic.

And that's the paradox: Doug Henning wasn't just a magician—he was proof that revealing a sense of wonder can be just as powerful as hiding the secret behind it.
