Chet Richards

The lost arts of leadership

And how to get them back

Edition 18.22
July 2026

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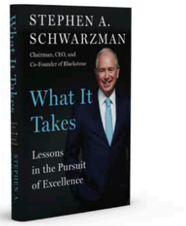
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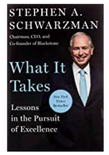
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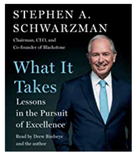


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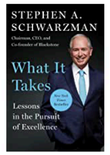
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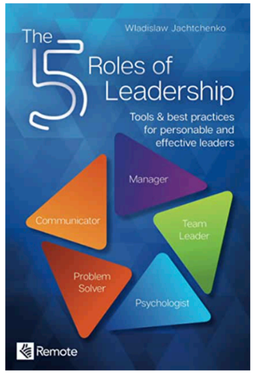
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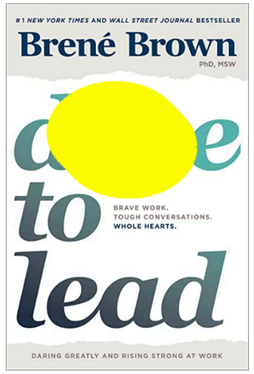
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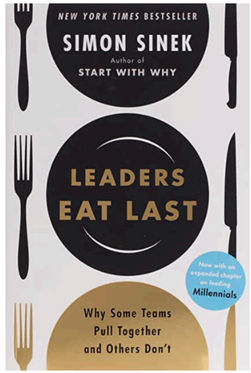
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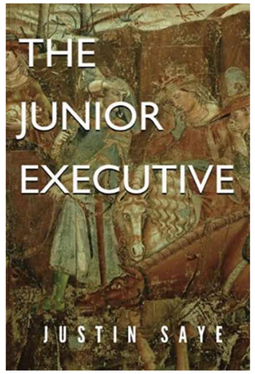
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Is there something missing in leadership?

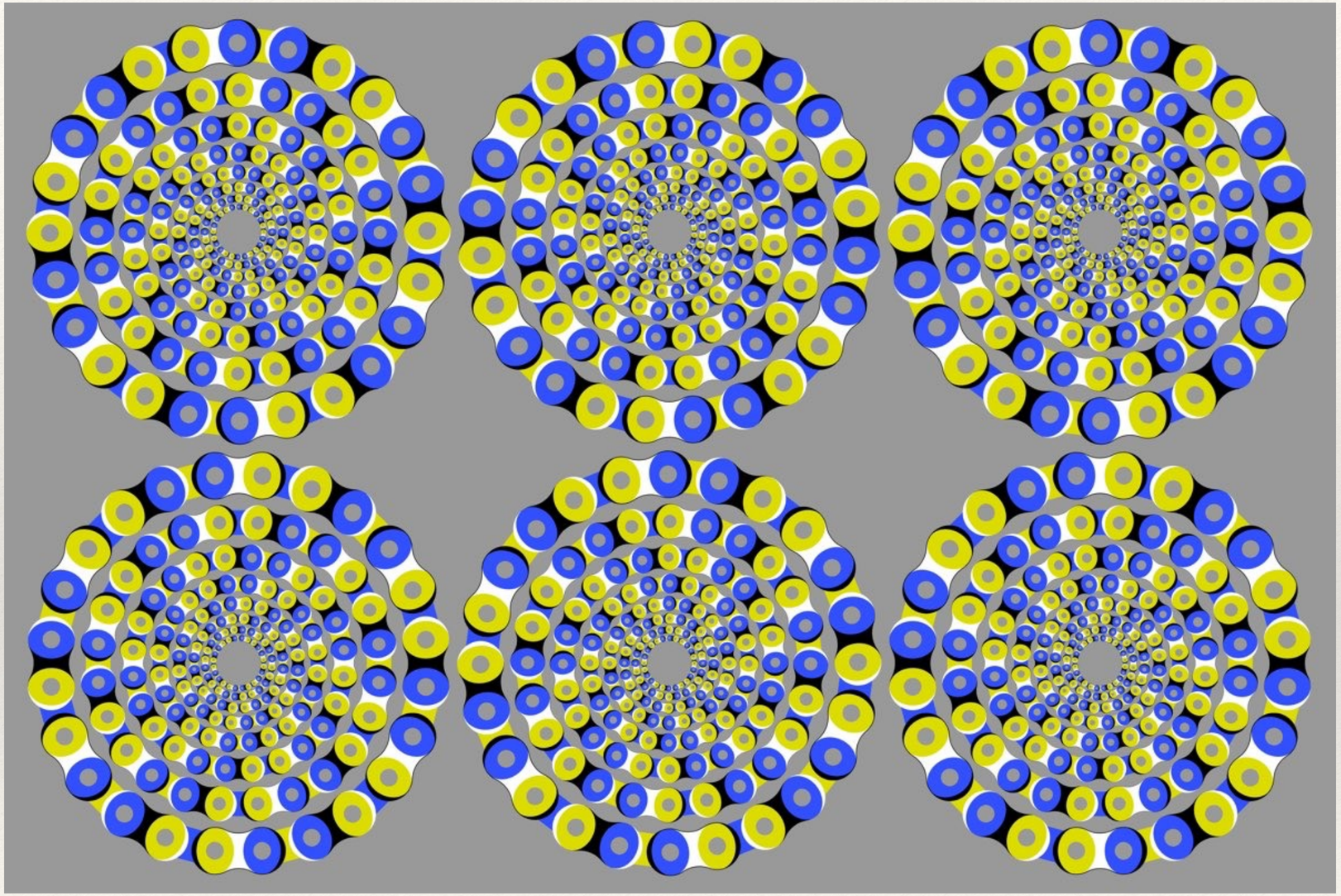
- Between 2010 and 2026, nearly half of the Fortune 500 was replaced, with roughly 234 companies removed from the original 499 listed in 2010. Google Gemini
- According to the Wall Street Journal, "almost half of the S&P 500 weren't on that list 20 years ago."
- A Wharton study recently reported that one-third of American companies mandate 100% attendance at the office every day. No hybrid or WFH.

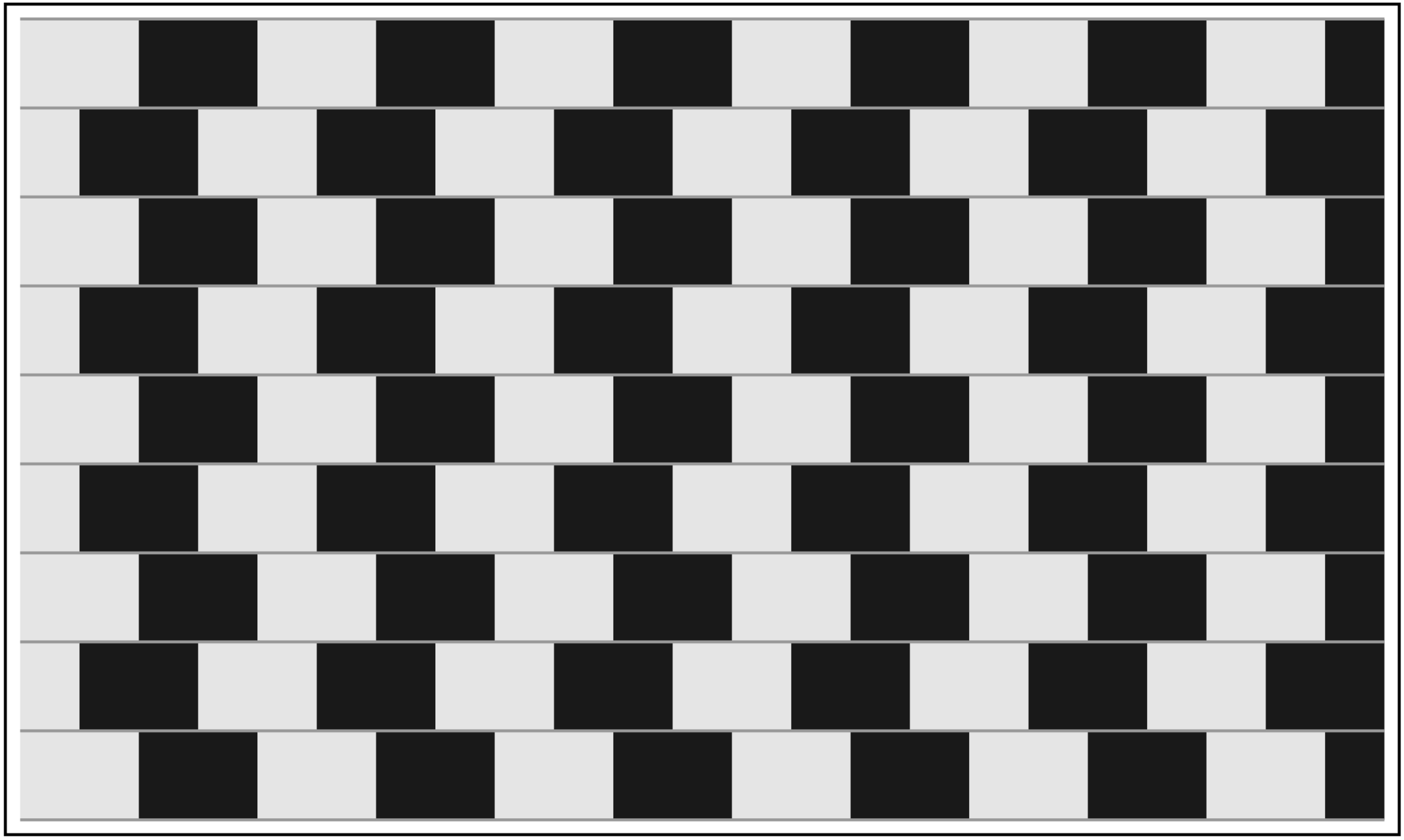
So what’s missing???

Do you believe

Do you believe in magic?







All our perceptions are active constructions, brain-based best guesses at the nature of a world that is forever obscured behind a sensory veil.

"The Neuroscience of Reality" Anil K. Seth,
Scientific American, 8/20/2019

Therefore:

"Perception is never a direct window" to anything we perceive, including our own organization.

Obviously this can present problems — illusions about how our organization is performing, for example.

But it also presents opportunities.

But it also presents opportunities.

Let me explain.

Magic you can actually use:

1. Stage magic

This is what makes magic so difficult: ***The magician must sell people a lie even as they know they're being lied to.***

Teller, of the long-running Vegas act, Penn & Teller



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lo5BRAKvJoA

So the brain predicts the path of motion before it happens.
It tells us a story about where the object is heading,
***and this story becomes our reality*.**

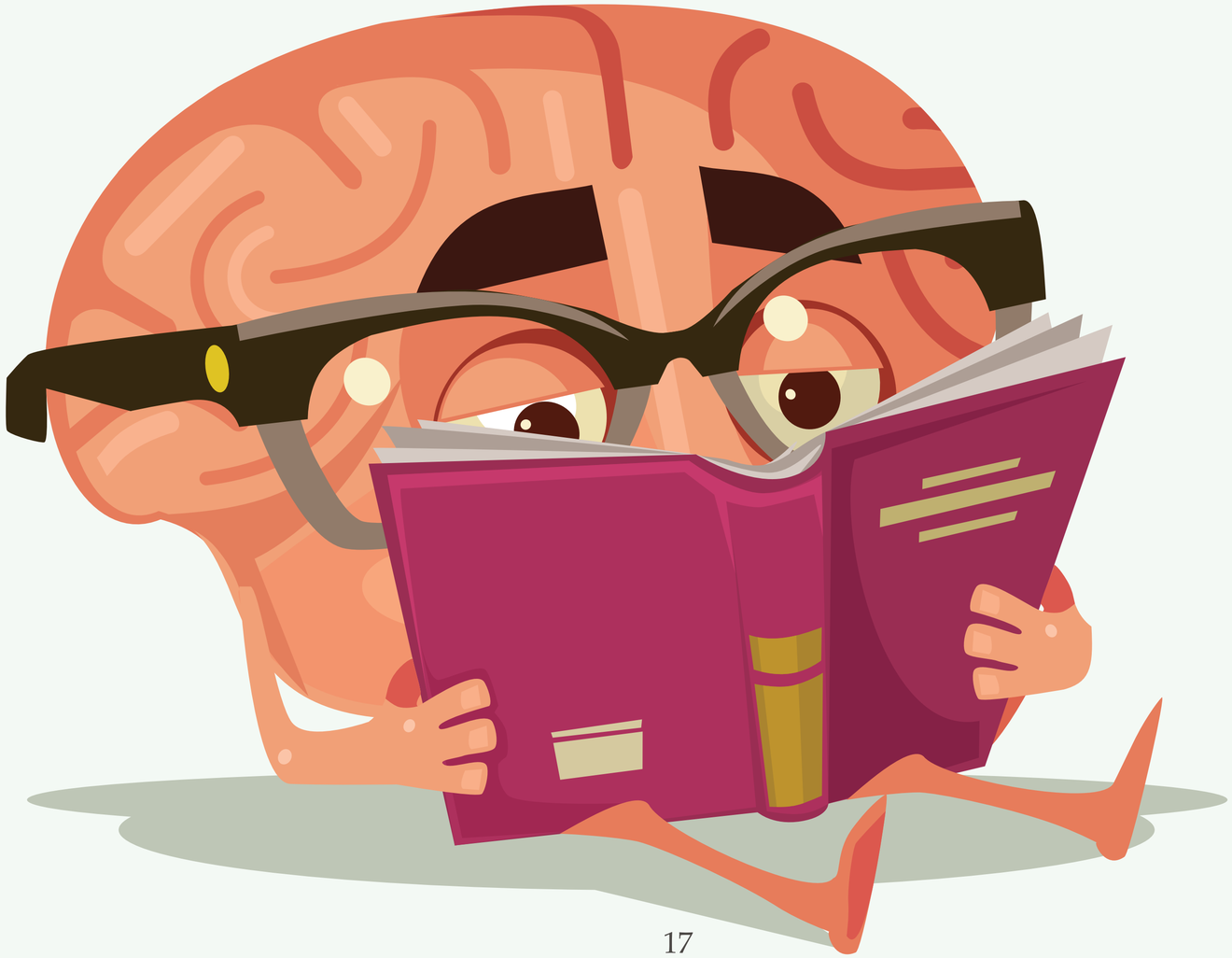
"Reality" is constructed by your brain.
Here's what that means, and why it matters,
Brian Resnick, Vox, 6/22/2022

Magic you can actually use:

2. Mentalism

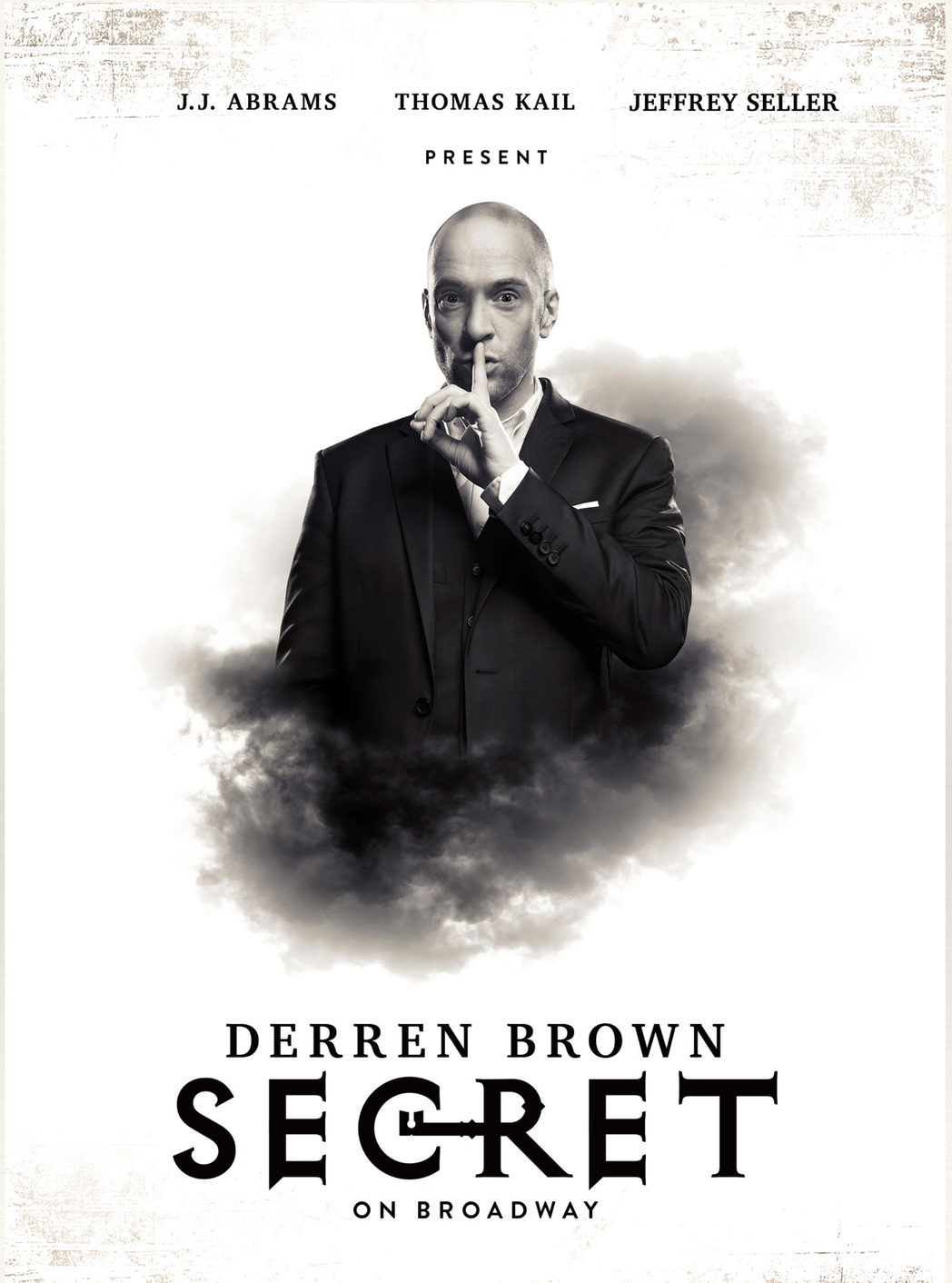
Mentalism: Mind Reading & Control

Mentalism: Mind Reading & Control

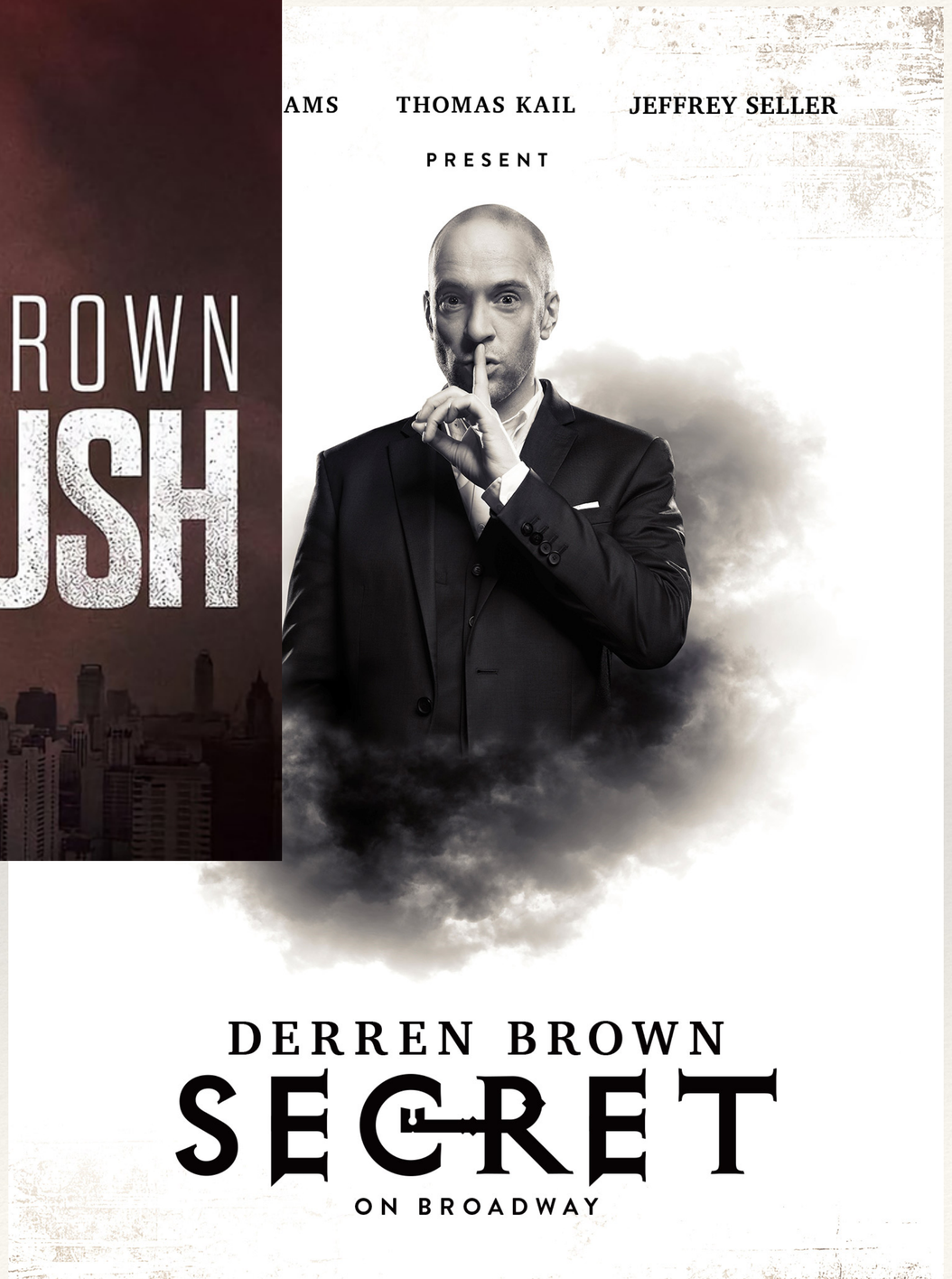


Let's be honest here

- "The art of inspiring people to enthusiastically take action toward the achievement of uncommon goals."
- So "leadership" is really just mind control under a more marketable name.
- So let's see if we can pick up some pointers from people who do it for a living.


J.J. ABRAMS
THOMAS KAIL
JEFFREY SELLER
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How mentalism works

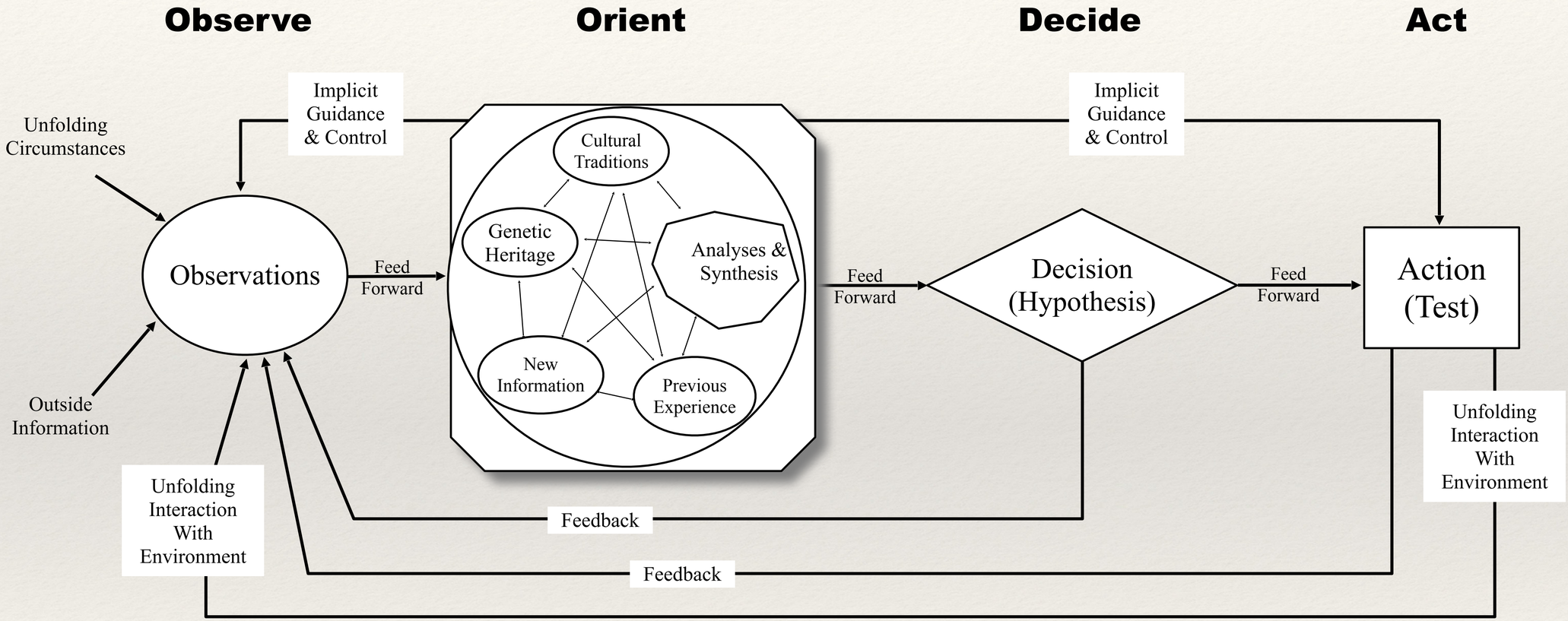
"magic, suggestion, psychology, misdirection, and showmanship," not to mention "the power of the well-placed lie."

British mentalist Derren Brown, "How Derren Brown remade mind reading for skeptics" *The New Yorker*, 9/30/2019

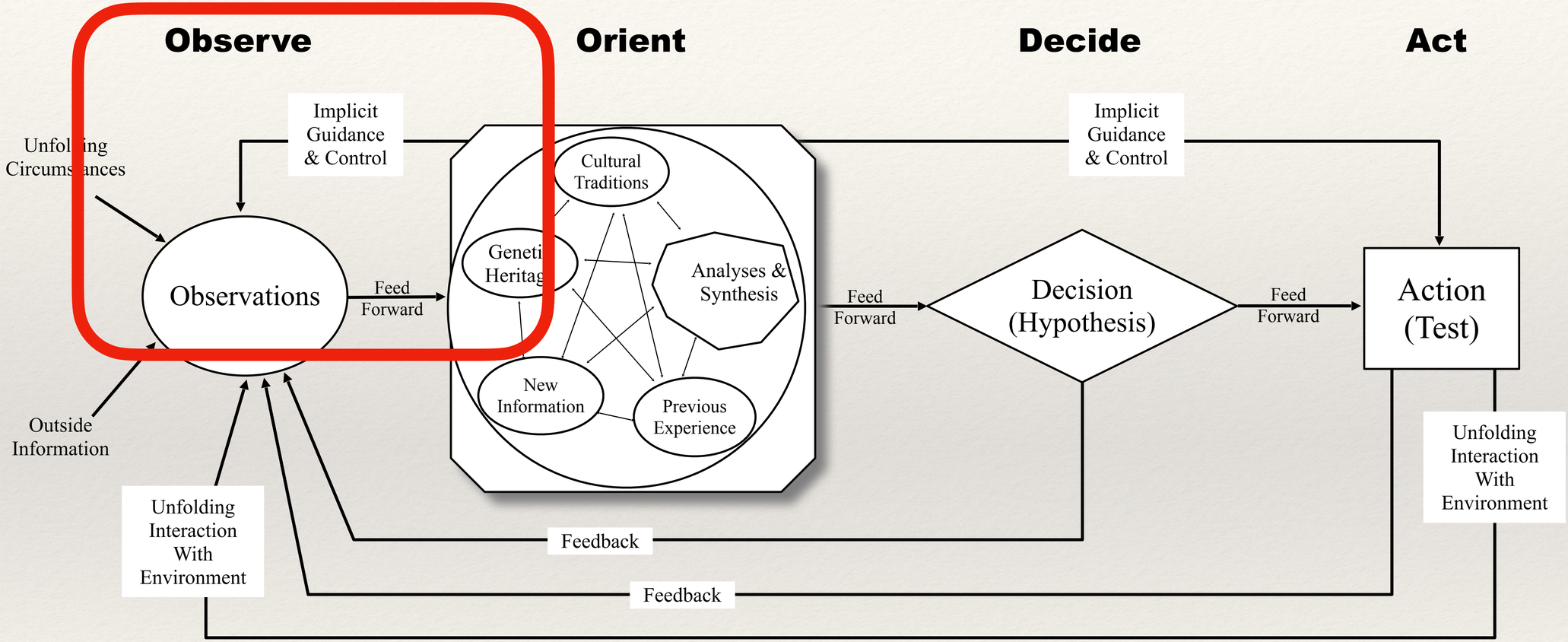
Principles of mentalism

- Create surprise & confusion
- Practice “cold reading”
- Subtly make suggestions (“hypnosis”; anchoring)
- Exploit confirmation bias / “incestuous amplification” / inattentional blindness

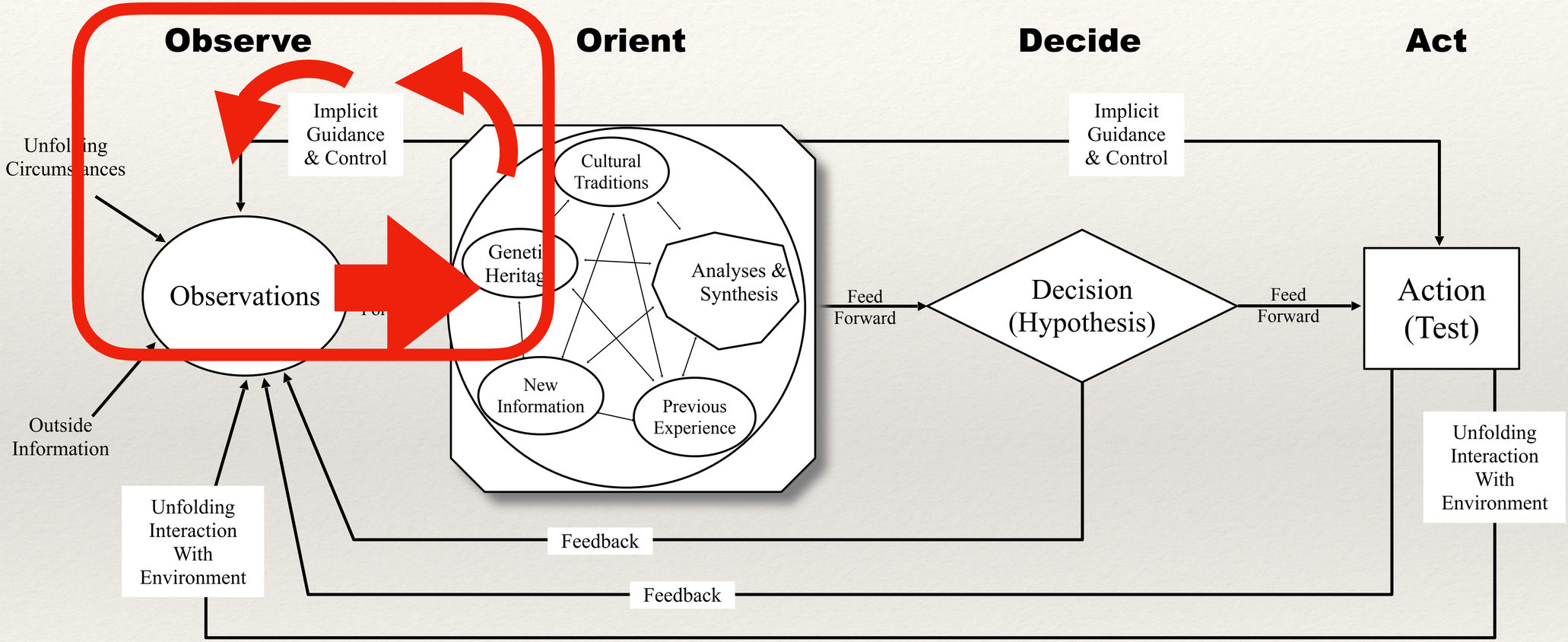
Incestuous amplification



Incestuous amplification



Incestuous amplification



Mentalism is everywhere

Mentalism is everywhere

- HUMINT & Interrogation

Mentalism is everywhere

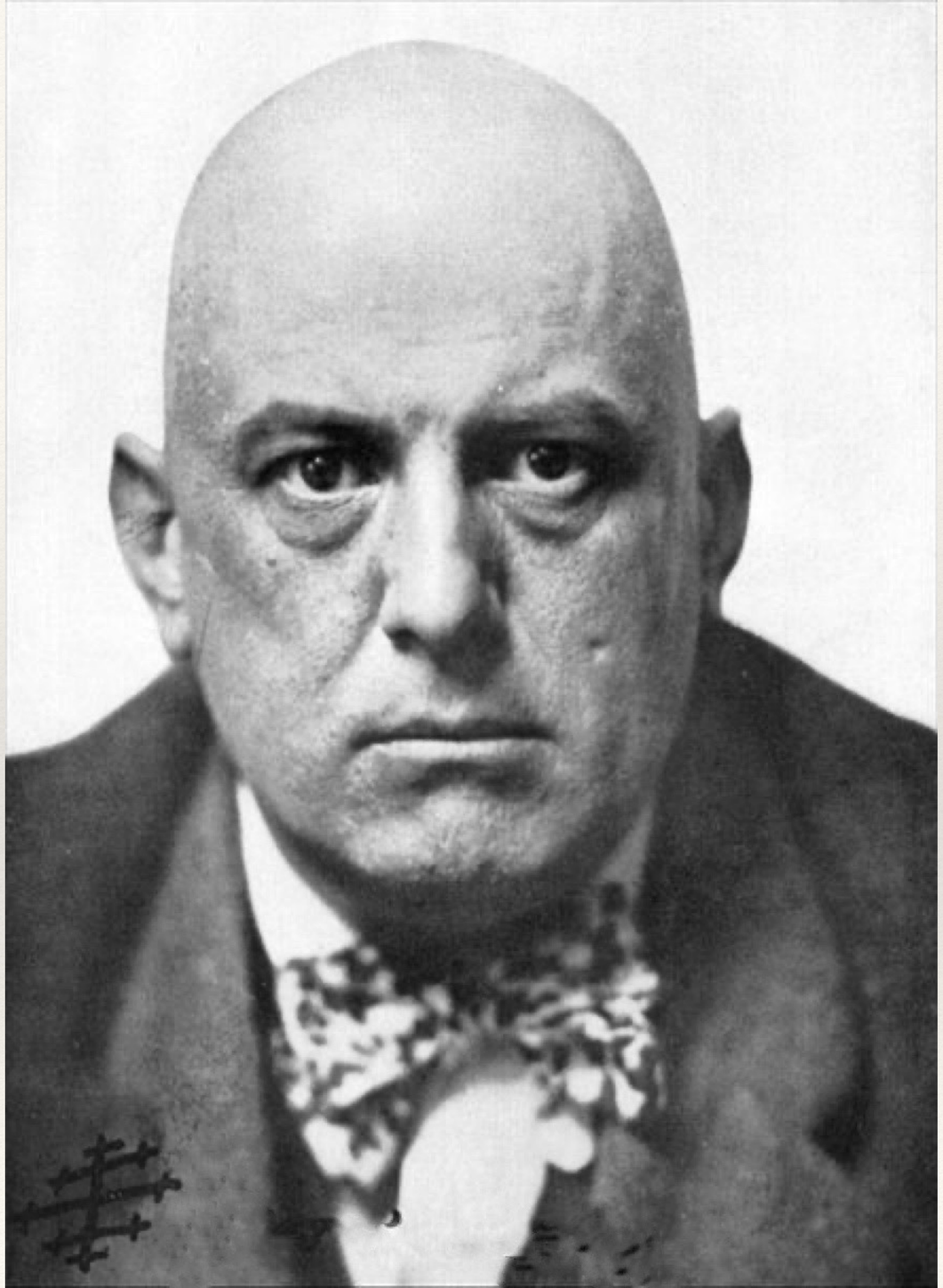
- HUMINT & Interrogation
- Fortune telling

Mentalism is everywhere

- HUMINT & Interrogation
- Fortune telling
- Psychic sessions

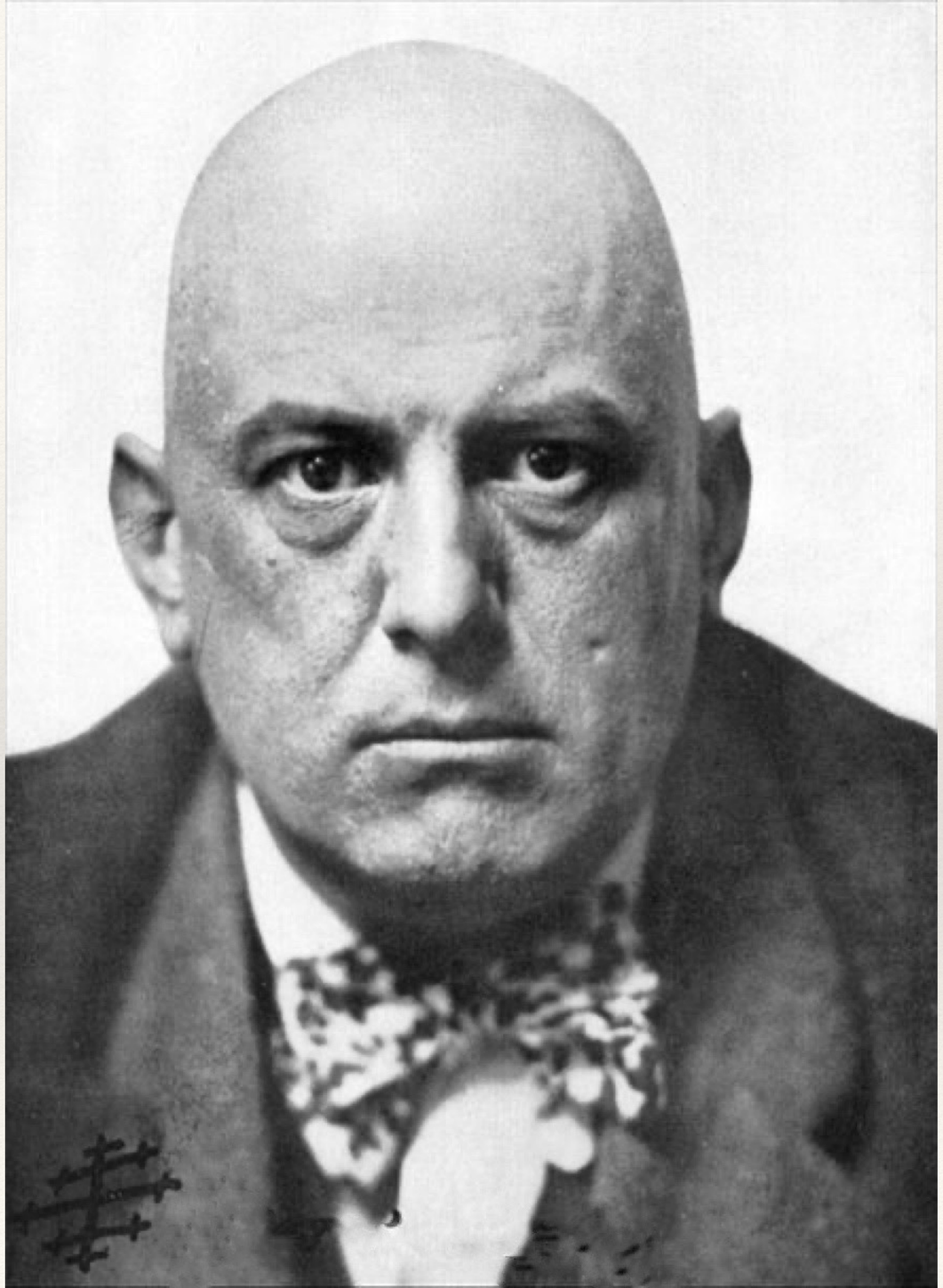
Mentalism is everywhere

- HUMINT & Interrogation
- Fortune telling
- Psychic sessions
- Religious and ideological organizations



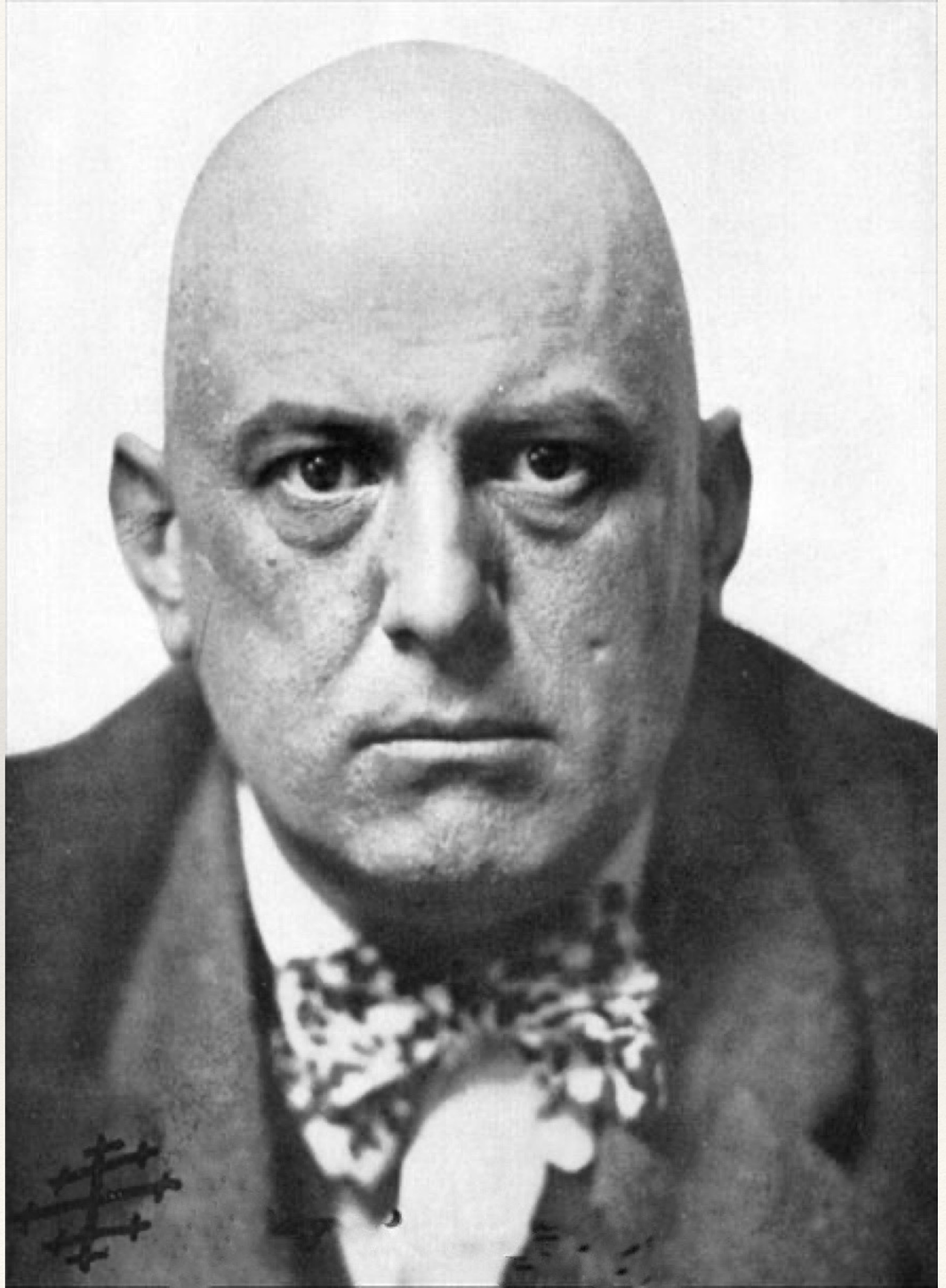
Mentalism is everywhere

- HUMINT & Interrogation
- Fortune telling
- Psychic sessions
- Religious and ideological organizations
- Romance



Mentalism is everywhere

- HUMINT & Interrogation
- Fortune telling
- Psychic sessions
- Religious and ideological organizations
- Romance
- Salary negotiations; promotions; plum assignments, etc.



Management should be done not by arithmetic but by *ninjutsu*, the art of invisibility.

Taiichi Ohno, *Toyota Production System*, 69.



Mentalism in war

- To become the enemy is to think as if one were the enemy.

- Using your knowledge of military tactics, think of all the enemies as your own soldiers. You are the general. The enemies are soldiers under your command.

Miyamoto Musashi, *Book of Five Rings*
1645



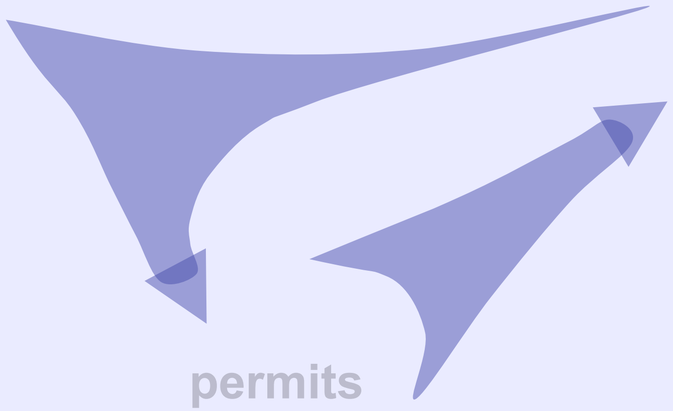
Magic!!

Transients

- Observe, orient, decide and act more inconspicuously, more quickly, and with more irregularity …

or put another way

- Operate inside adversary's observation-orientation-decision-action loops or get inside his mind-time-space.



permits one to

Intuitions

- Probe and test adversary to unmask strengths, weaknesses, maneuvers, and intentions.
- Employ a variety of measures that interweave menace-uncertainty-mistrust with tangles of ambiguity-deception-novelty as basis to **sever adversary's moral ties and disorient …**
- Select initiative (or response) that is least expected.
- Establish focus of main effort together with other effort and pursue directions that permit many happenings, offer many branches, and threaten alternative objectives.
- Move along paths of least resistance (to reinforce and exploit success).
- Exploit, rather than disrupt or destroy, those differences, frictions, and obsessions of adversary organism that interfere with his ability to cope …
- **Subvert**, **disorient**, **overload**, or **seize** adversary's vulnerable, yet critical, connections, centers, and activities … in order to dismember organism and isolate remaining parts for wrap-up or absorption.
- **Generate uncertainty, confusion, disorder, panic, chaos … to shatter cohesion, produce paralysis and bring about collapse.**
- Become an extraordinary commander.

John Boyd, Patterns of Conflict (1986), Chart 132

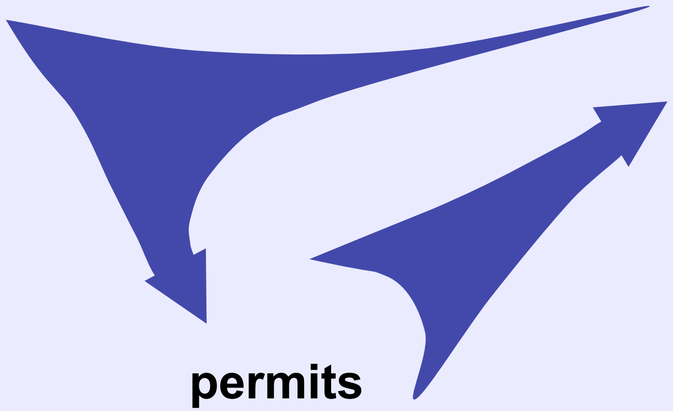
Second impression

Transients

- Observe, orient, decide and act more inconspicuously, more quickly, and with more irregularity …

or put another way

- Operate inside adversary's observation-orientation-decision-action loops or get inside his mind-time-space.



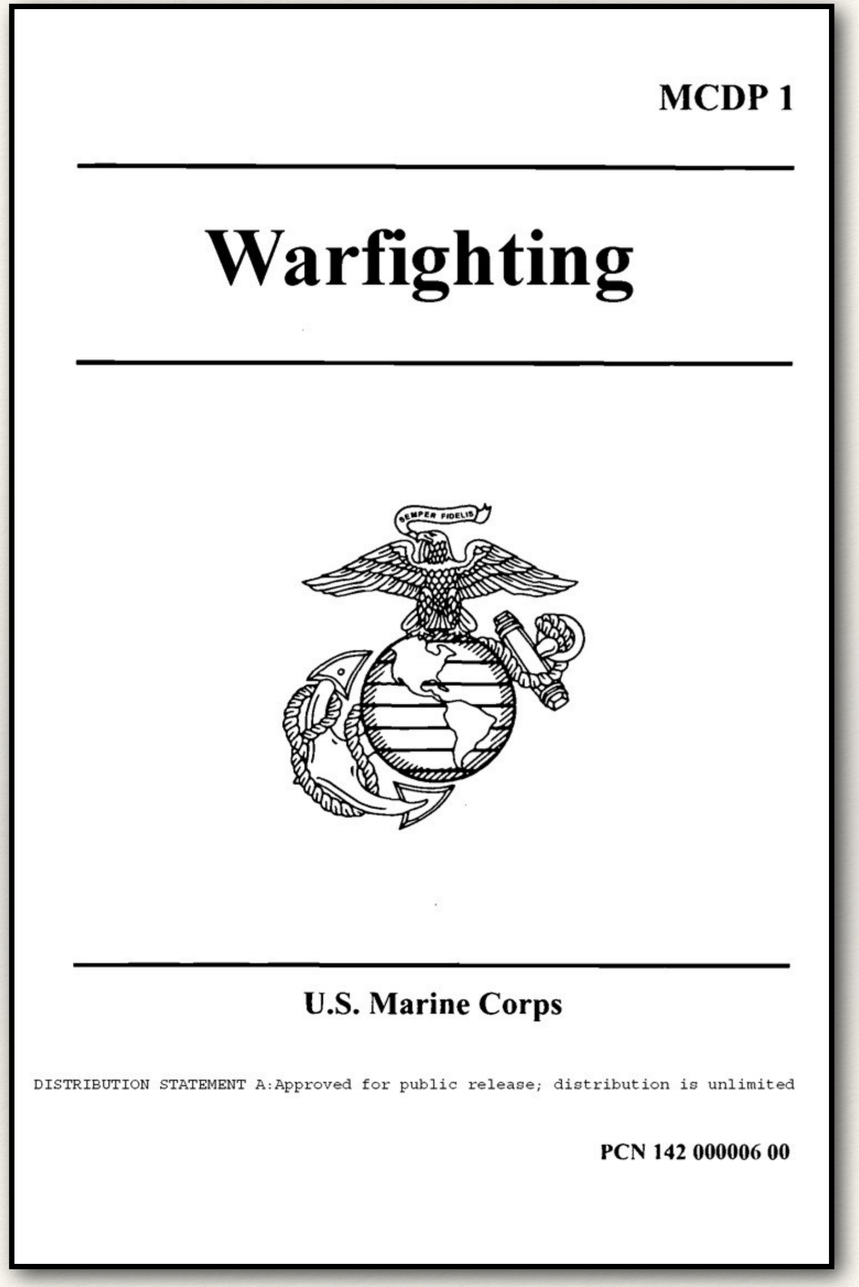
Intentions

- Probe and test adversary to unmask strengths, weaknesses, maneuvers, and intentions.
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- Become an extraordinary commander.

John Boyd, Patterns of Conflict (1986), Chart 132

Mentalism in military leadership

We believe that implicit communication—to communicate through mutual understanding, using a minimum of key, well-understood phrases or even anticipating each others' thoughts—is a faster, more effective way to communicate than through the use of detailed, explicit instructions.


MCDP 1

Warfighting

SEMPER FIDELIS

U.S. Marine Corps

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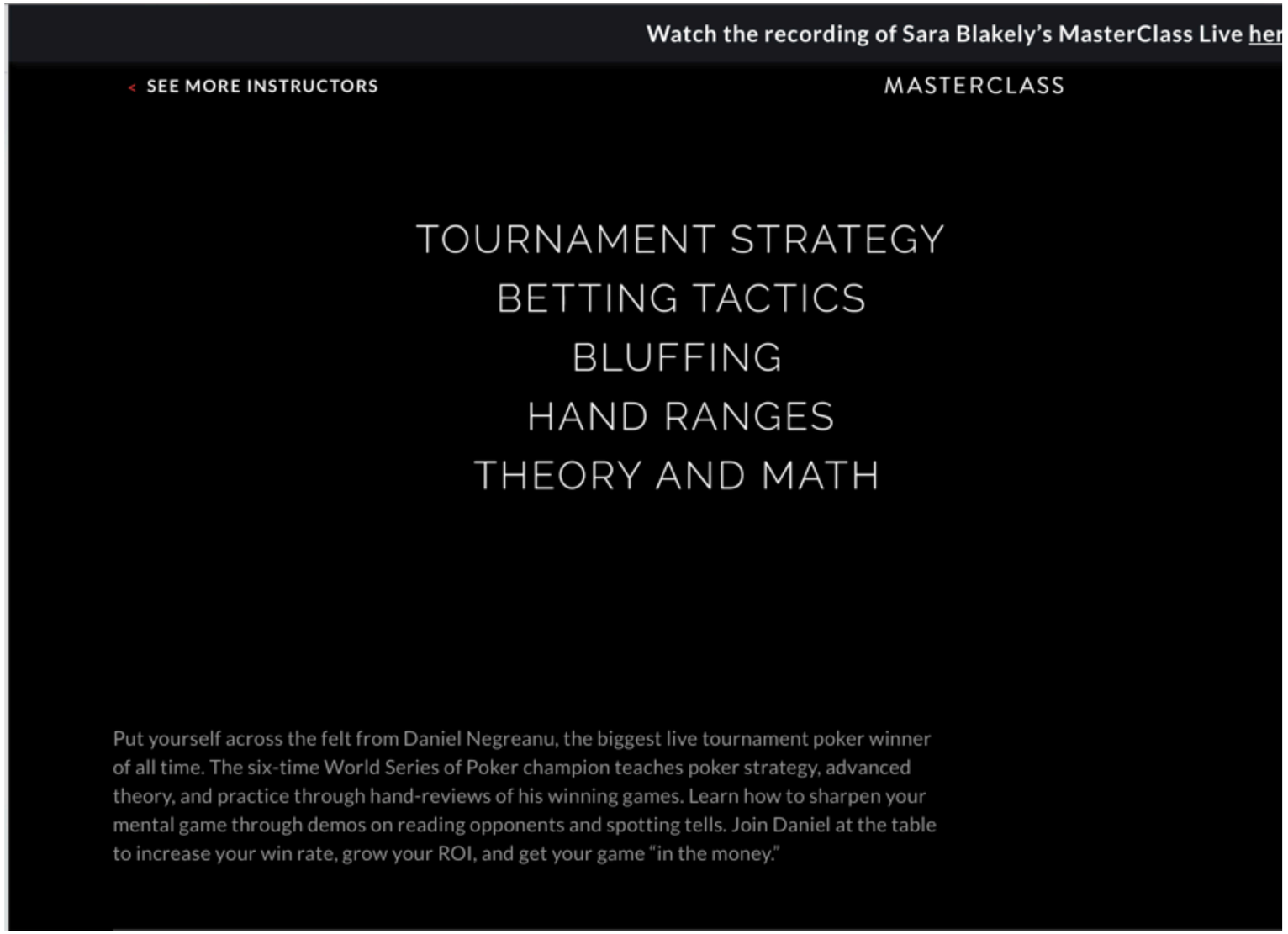
Magic you can actually use:

3. Gambling

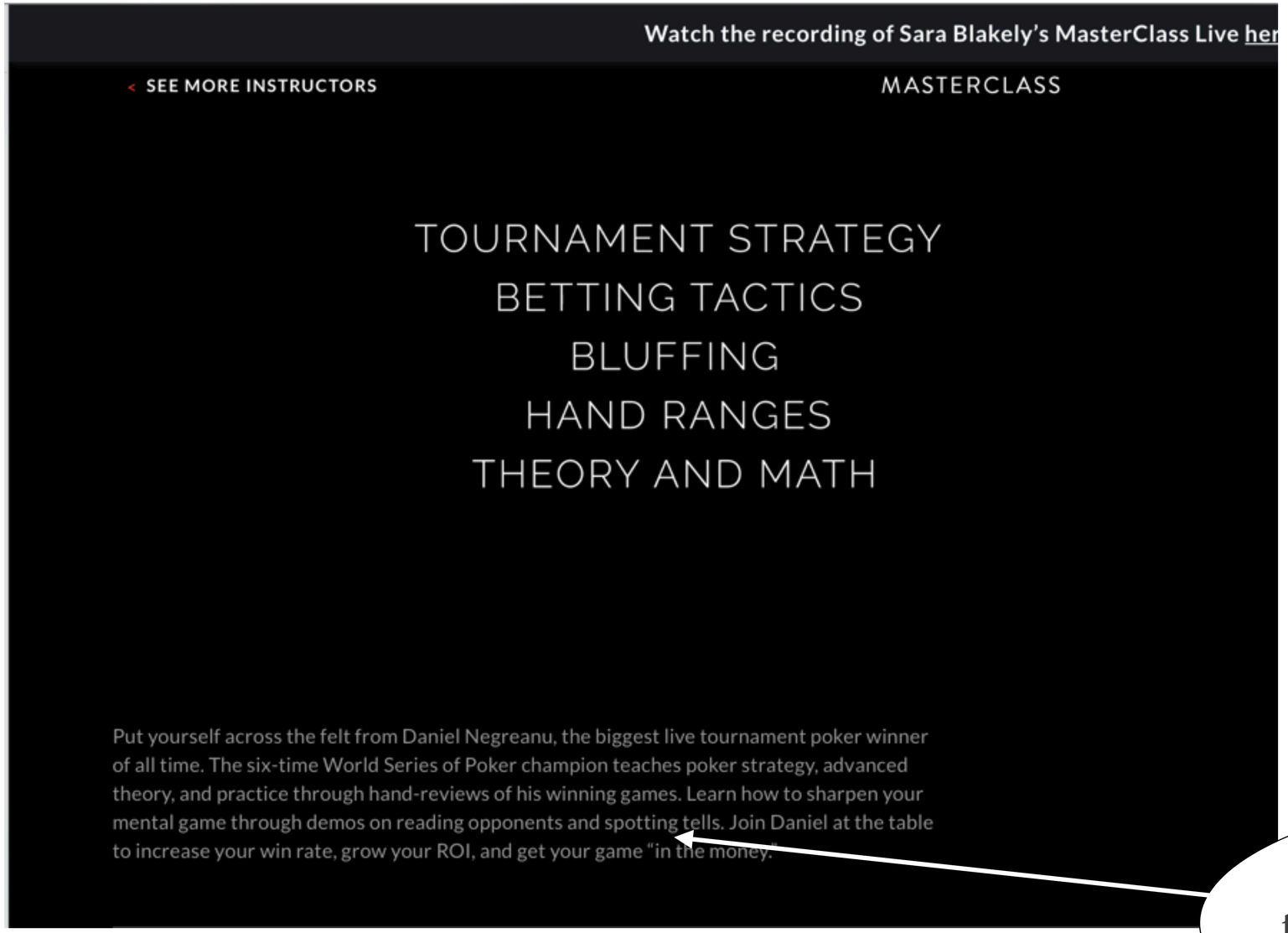
Magic you can actually use:

3. Gambling

Professional gamblers don’t play the cards. They play the other players.



Poker is an intellectual endeavor that is actually skill-based over time. — Daniel Negreanu, champion professional poker player, https://www.masterclass.com/classes/daniel-negreanu-teaches-poker

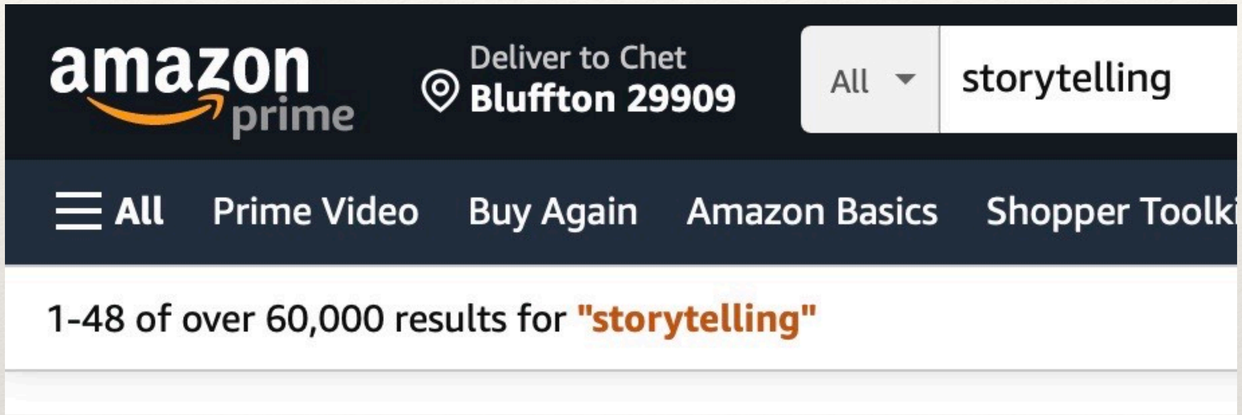


Poker is an intellectual endeavor that is actually skill-based over time. — Daniel Negreanu, champion professional poker player, https://www.masterclass.com/classes/daniel-negreanu-teaches-poker

" … sharpen your mental game through demos on reading opponents and spotting tells."

Magic you can actually use:

4. Storytelling


amazon prime
Deliver to Chet
Bluffton 29909
All
storytelling
All
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1-48 of over 60,000 results for "storytelling"

Where's the magic????

Might as well get out the guitar and sing "Kumbaya."

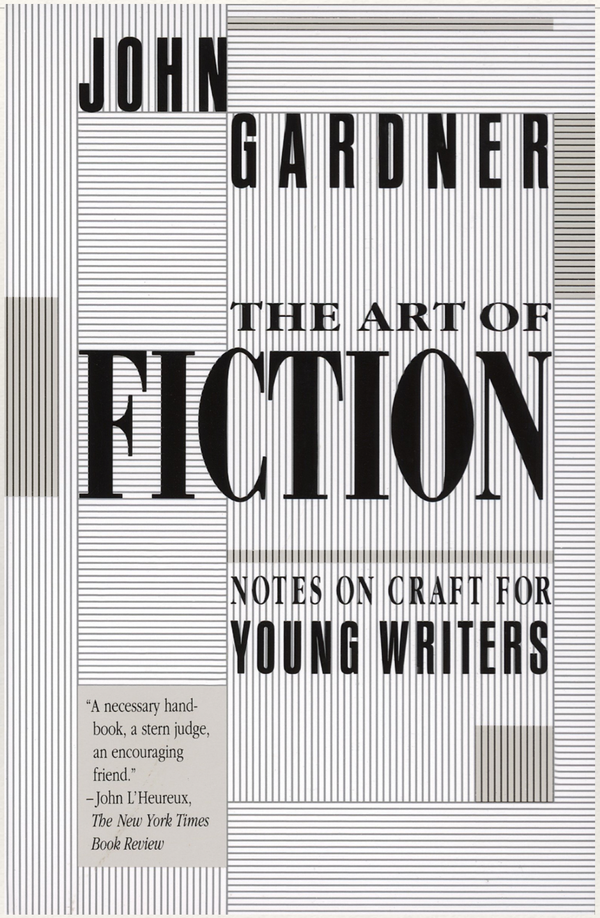
Unless:

- Your story serves a higher purpose: e.g., curating of attention or anchoring, *and*
- You know how to tell stories.

Do you know how to tell stories?

Show of hands: How many of you that have had formal leadership training (I'll accept an MBA) where you had to construct and deliver effective stories in order to graduate?

I'll also accept "write short stories."

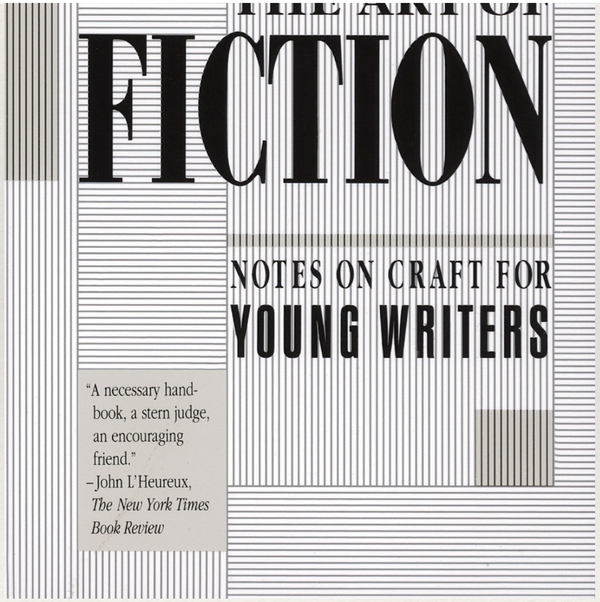

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THE ART OF
FICTION
NOTES ON CRAFT FOR
YOUNG WRITERS
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book, a stern judge,
an encouraging
friend."
–John L'Heureux,
The New York Times
Book Review

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Study of fiction in both theory and practice. Narrative technique studied in terms of subjectivity and atmosphere, description, dialogue, and the editing process will be introduced through readings from the history of the novel and short story. Students are required to attend at least three New Writing Series readings during the quarter. ***Prerequisites:*** CAT 2 and 3 or DOC 2 and 3 or HUM 1 and 2 or MCWP 40 and 50 or MMW 12 and 13 or WARR 11A-B or WCWP 10A-B or SYN 1 and 2.

LTWR 8B. Writing Poetry (4)
Study and practice of poetry as artistic and communal expression. Techniques of composition (traditional forms, avant garde techniques, dramatic monologue, performance poetry, and new genre) studied through written and spoken examples of poetry. Students are required to attend at least three New Writing Series readings during the quarter. ***Prerequisites:*** CAT 2 and 3 or DOC 2 and 3 or HUM 1 and 2 or MCWP 40 and 50 or MMW 12 and 13 or WARR 11A-B or WCWP 10A-B or SYN 1 and 2.



LITERATURE/WRITING

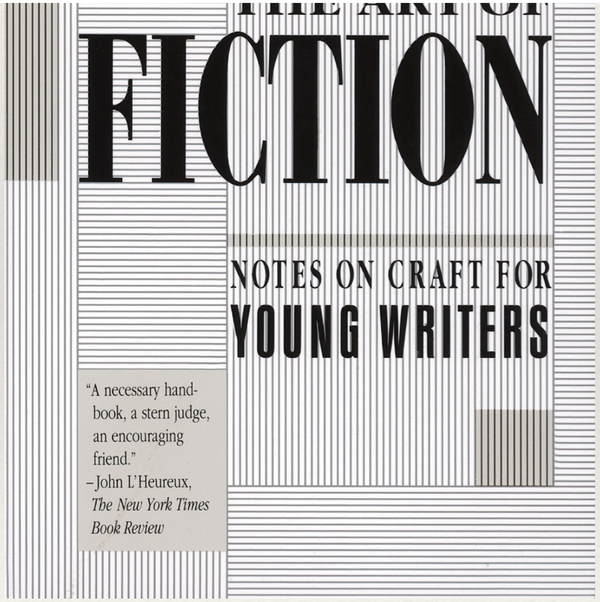
Lower Division

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LTWR 8B. Writing Poetry (4)

Study and practice of poetry as artistic and communal expression. Techniques of compo performance poetry, and new genre) studied through written and spoken examples of poe readings during the quarter. ***Prerequisites:*** CAT 2 and 3 or DOC 2 and 3 or HUM 1 and 2 o or SYN 1 and 2.





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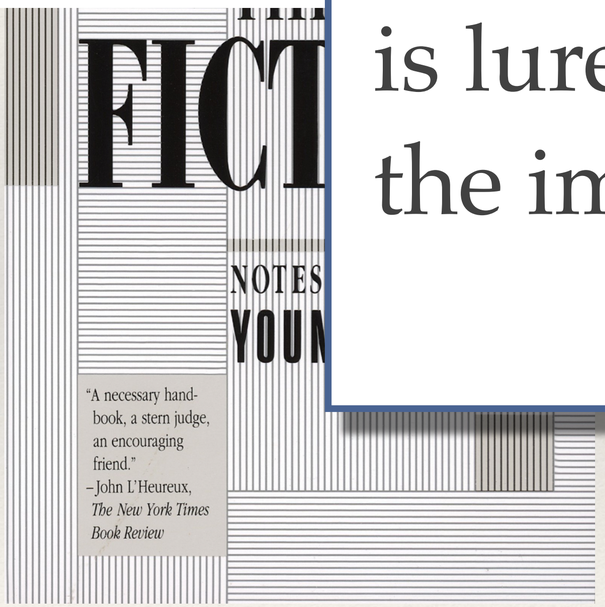
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or SYN 1 and 2.



From the realm of the unfamiliar, but reasonable and possible, the spectator is lured to the improbable—even to the impossible.

Magician Dariel Fitzkee









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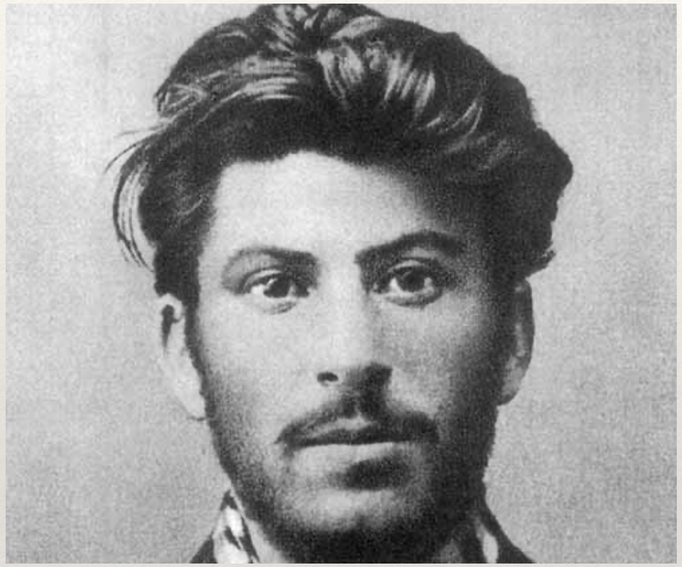


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AP® English Literature & Composition – Part 3: Plays
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The power of poetry



He is a Caucasian, exotic and mysterious, as a man of secrets should be;

a romantic poet of some achievement;

a natural actor, who could win anybody over when he was in the mood.

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Magic you can actually use:

5. Shape shifting



Magic you can actually use:

5. AKA "Acting"

But I want to be authentic

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Unfortunately,

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Unfortunately,

Your authentic persona is probably not very inspiring:

But I want to be authentic

Unfortunately,

Your authentic persona is probably not very inspiring:

- Uh … umm … tending to rambling and repeating … standing at rigid attention and reading the slides to your audience.

But I want to be authentic

Unfortunately,

Your authentic persona is probably not very inspiring:

- Uh … umm … tending to rambling and repeating … standing at rigid attention and reading the slides to your audience.
- You don’t give any sign you’re interested in the person you’re talking to.

Leadership

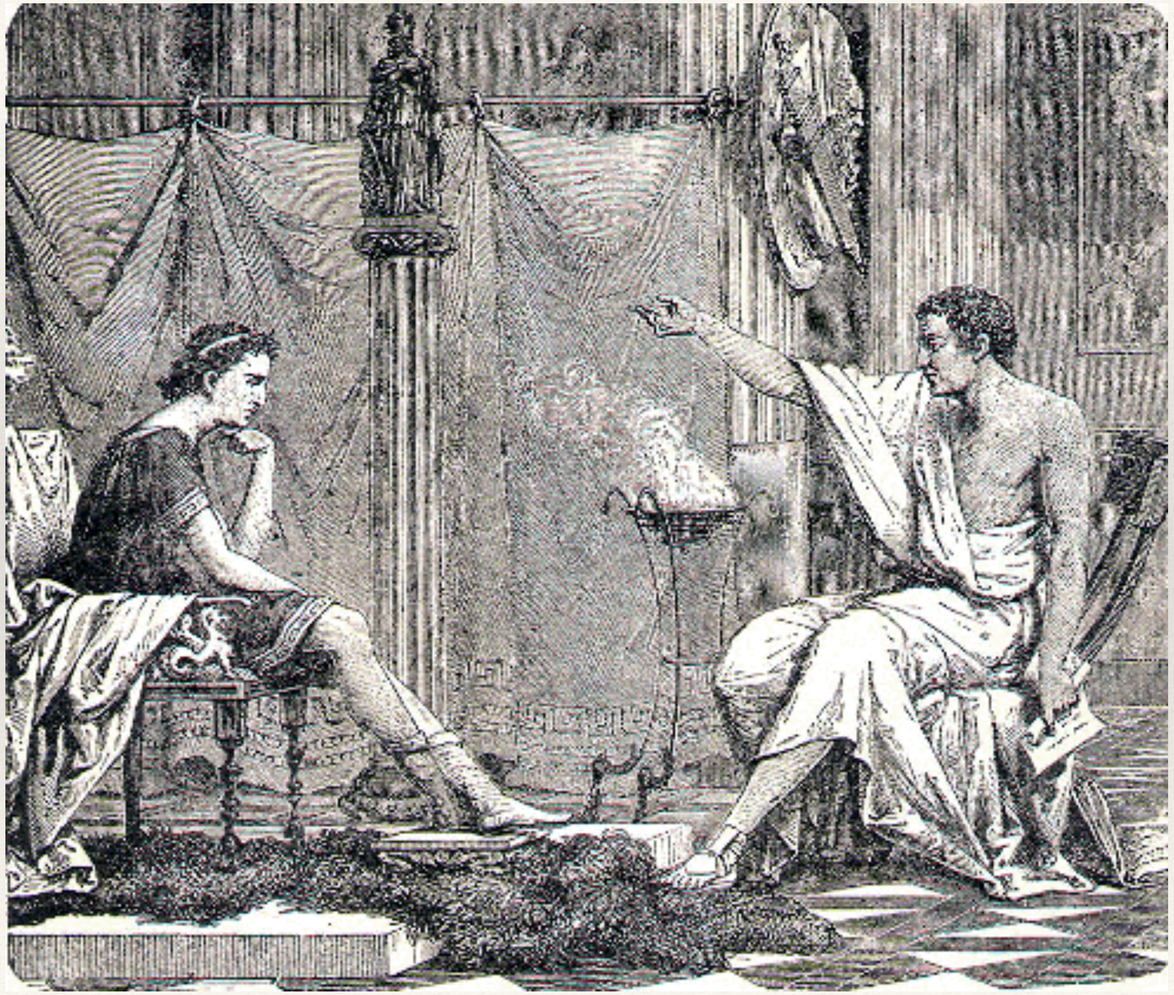
The ability to:

Fire up the creativity and initiative of everyone in the organization,

~ *and* ~

Harmonize all this activity to accomplish the objectives of the organization.

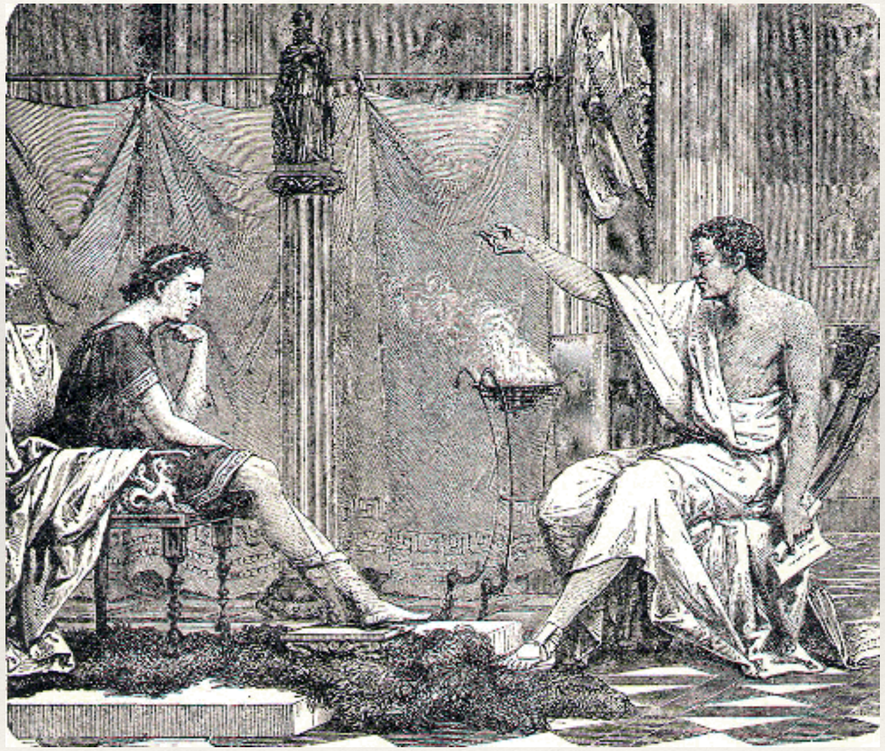
In other words, leadership is all about persuasion



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Aristotle: Rhetoric, the faculty of observing in any given case all the available means of persuasion.

- Three persuasive audience appeals: logos, pathos, and ethos



Pericles' Funeral Oration, 421 BCE

- Antithesis
- Anacoluthon
- Asyndeton
- Anastrophe
- Anadiplosis
- Asterismos
- Eutrepismus
- Procatalepsis
- Metonymy
- Anaphora
- Apophasis
- Symploce
- Aporia
- Exergasia
- Dysphemism
- Litotes
- Antimetabole

To be an effective leader, it helps to be a good actor



To be an effective leader, it helps to be a good actor





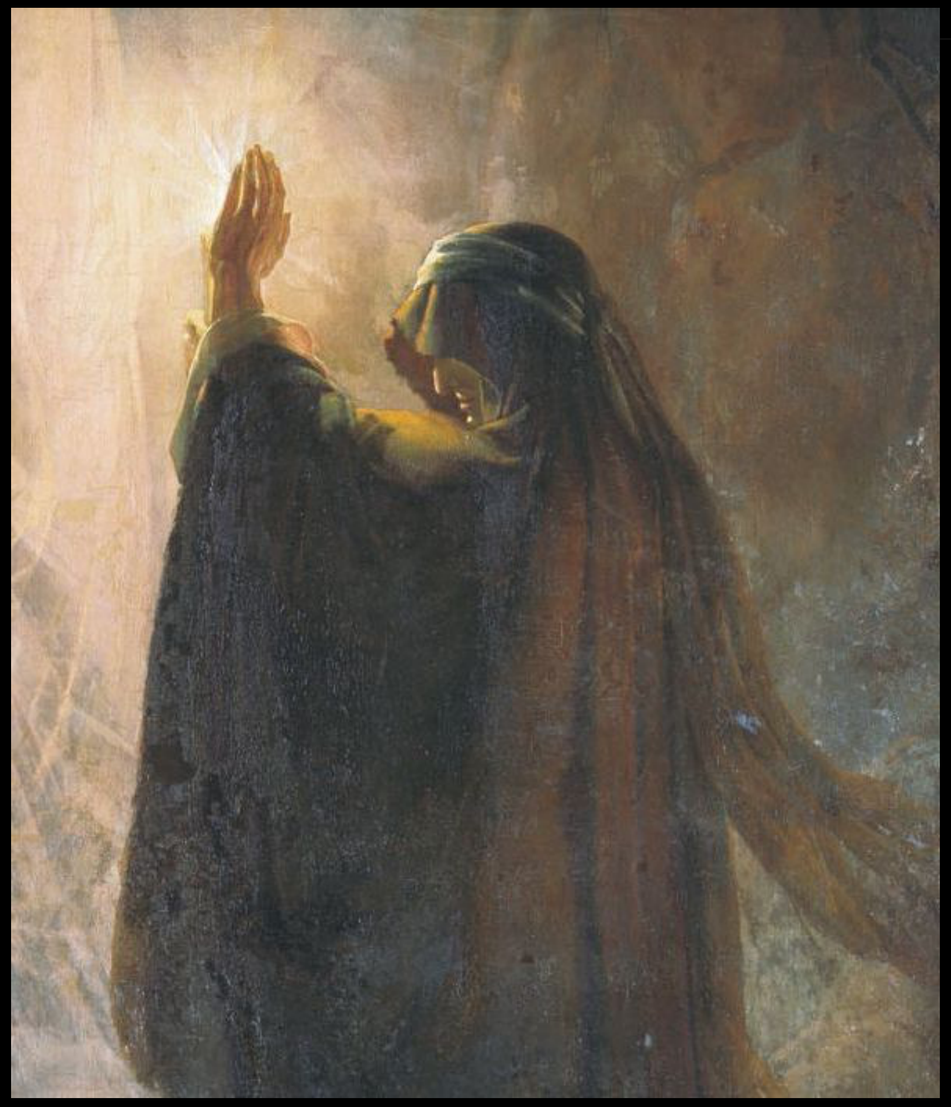

Let us be honest.
None of this is real magic.

Real magic

- Sorcery & Witchcraft
- Necromancy
- Divination
- Conjuring

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Real magic

Any formalised practices by human beings designed to achieve particular ends by the control, manipulation, and direction of supernatural power or of spiritual power concealed within the natural world (Professor Ronald Hutton, Bristol University, UK, from the Gresham College YouTube Channel).

GLENDOWER
I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

GLENDOWER

I can call spirits from the vasty deep.



GLENDOWER
I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

HOTSPUR
Why, so can I, or so can any man,
But will they come when you do call for them?



Point: If you can reliably "control, manipulate, direct, or subdue" useful forces (natural or otherwise), you have a skill or technology.

- Any technology sufficiently advanced is indistinguishable from magic.

— Arthur C. Clarke

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- My version: Any skill can be developed to the point where it appears magical,

- Any technology sufficiently advanced is indistinguishable from magic.

— Arthur C. Clarke

- My version: Any skill can be developed to the point where it appears magical,
- Including leadership.

Engineering is magic made real.

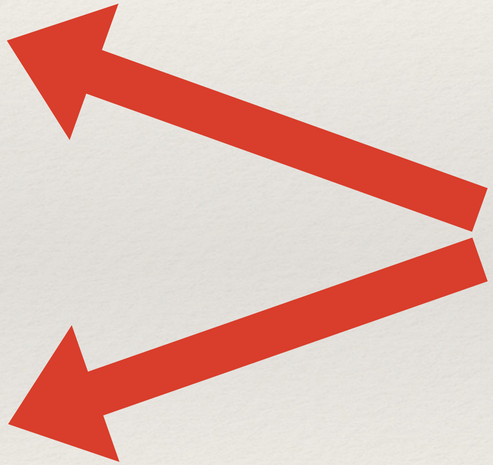
Elon Musk

Leadership is magic made real.

Some practical advice for using magic

Develop a deep understanding of why these work:

- Stage magic
- Mentalism
- Gambling
- Story telling
- Acting



Learn, practice and use these

Wherever you find yourself and in whatever circumstances, give an impeccable performance.

Epictetus


HOW DARE YOU QUESTION ME!!