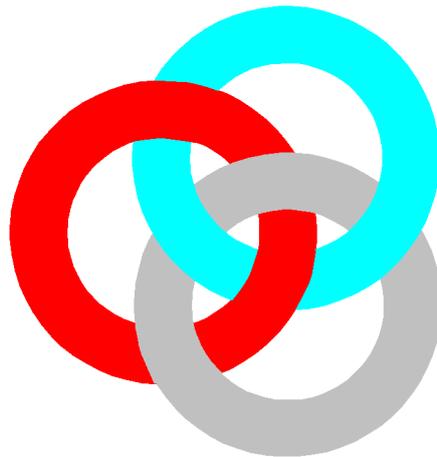


The Borromean Ring Release Effect

David Mitchell

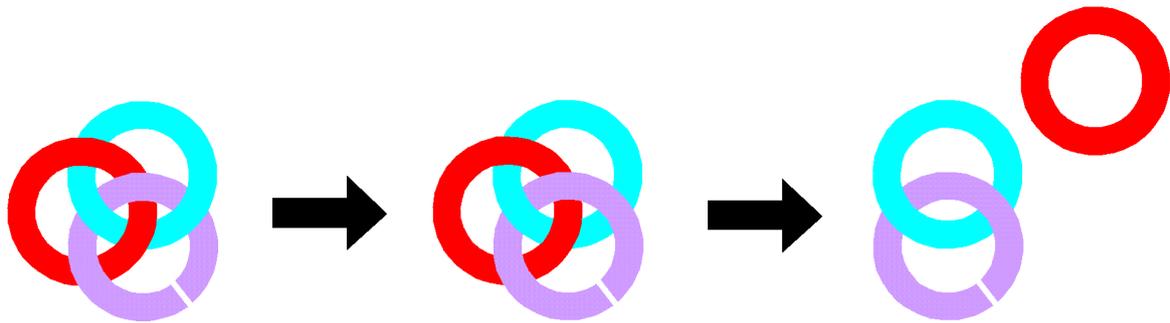
I discovered this rather magical effect in 1999 when I was writing a book proposal for Tarquin publications. Unfortunately the book never made it to print.



The Borromean Rings are an implausible object because despite the fact that none of the rings is linked to either of the others they cannot be separated without cutting one of them apart. However, if you first make a cut through one ring and then link it to either of the others the third ring is automatically released. Yes, you read that correctly, joining two rings releases the third. Here is how it is done.

To work the effect you need two complete rings, and a third which has a split in it.

Put the rings together in the normal way with the split facing outwards and hold the split between finger and thumb. You can now demonstrate that no two rings are linked, although none of them can be removed since the third ring always holds them together.



Now turn the ring with the slit in - the purple ring in the pictures here - until you can slip it outside and above the blue ring, then turn it back to its original position. The blue and purple rings are now linked in the way shown in the middle picture. At a quick glance it looks as though all three rings are still linked together - but they're not. The red ring is actually no longer linked to the others.

To demonstrate this in a somewhat magical way get a friend to hold the two ends of the purple ring firmly together. You will find that if you make sure your friend is holding the purple ring securely and then take hold of the blue ring with one hand, where it sits inside the red ring, you can pull the red ring completely free with the other hand by passing it outside the blue ring underneath. This is much easier to do than to describe! The noise the red ring makes as it passes outside the blue ring sounds like paper tearing, which reinforces the effect.

Of course, it is simple mathematics rather than magic ... but nobody needs to know that, do they?

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