

ALPHA // PSYCHOPATH

Game category

Abstract Combinatorial Game

Description

The game has a twofold name: ALPHA is the name for the game mechanics and PSYCHOPATH the name for an «instantiation» of the mechanics through a psychiatric mythology. In this instantiation, the players have four types of pieces whose names refer to a psychiatric environment: the *psychopath* is the master piece that your opponent must capture; *doctors* and *informers* are used to perform the capture, and *psychologists* may reduce the moves of the opponent. These denominations give a pleasing atmosphere to the game and should help reminding the rules. They are mutable and the universe would mutate accordingly.

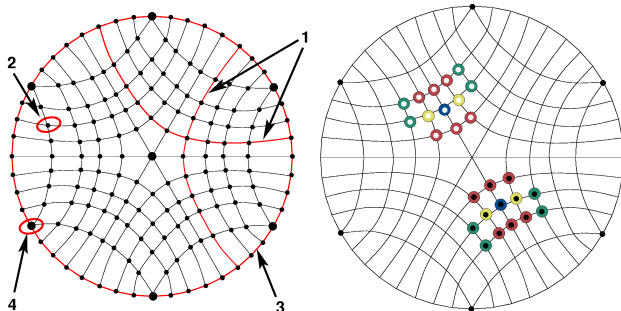
All pieces move the same way, all pieces may be captured the same way. The singularity of ALPHA mostly lies in its capturing fashion and its board shape. The capture is somehow unusual, as it involves an asymmetric configuration: one informer and two doctors. The geometry of the board is inspired from an hyperbolic tiling of the plane and was designed in harmony with this capture principle.

Composition

Each player has 13 pieces :

1 psychopath	
2 psychologists	
4 informers	
6 doctors	

The board game is a network of *paths* (1) ; a *node* (2) is just the crossing of two paths. The *border* (3) is the external path. It holds 6 *special nodes* (they are plotted a bit larger on the drawing: 4) . When the game starts, the pieces are placed in a frontal opening configuration like on the right-hand drawing.



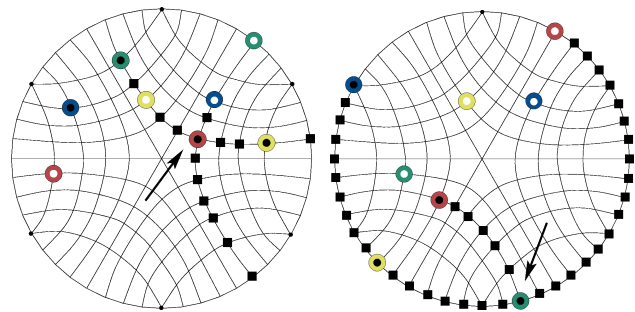
Object of the game

To capture the opposing player's psychopath !

In the meantime, you may weaken the opponent by capturing other pieces of his.

Moves

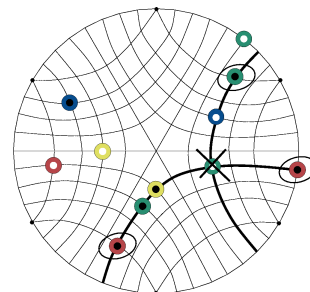
All game pieces move the same way: they move along a path, as far as desired along consecutive nodes, until meeting either the end of a path or a nonpsychologist piece. In the examples, the black squares indicate the allowed moves for the designated piece. In all the coming examples, we adopted the viewpoint of the black player.



Capture

Two doctors and one informer are needed to capture a piece. The piece to be captured is located at the crossing of two paths (three paths if it is placed on a special node or on the central node). The piece is captured if the following two conditions are fulfilled: 1.) two opposing doctors stand on the same path on opposite sides of the node 2.) an opposing informer stands on another path crossing that node. Player's and opponent's other pieces may stand between the two controlling doctors or the informer.

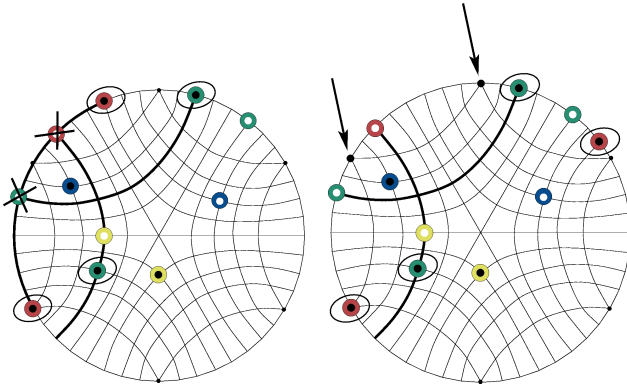
On the example, the white informer is captured and consequently is removed from the board.



SUICIDE – A piece cannot move to a node where it would be captured. Thus capturing a node may also be part of a strategy as it prevents the opponent to reach that node.

ON THE BORDER – When the piece is located on the border, there must be no more than one special node between the two doctors for the piece to be captured.

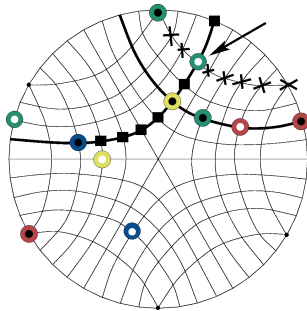
On the left-hand drawing, the two white pieces are simultaneously captured, while on the right-hand one both stay alive, as there are two special nodes between the black doctors.



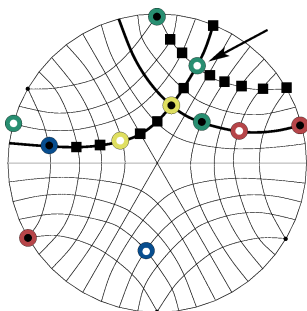
Paralysis and secondary effects

The psychologists have a paralyzing effect on the pieces: they may restraint their movements. When a piece is located on the same path as an opposing psychologist, it cannot leave the path on which is this psychologist.

In the examples, the black squares indicate the allowed moves and the crosses the forbidden ones for the designated piece.



PSYCHOLOGISTS PARLEY – If two (or more) opposing psychologists are on the same path, their paralysis effect cancel on that path.



RESURRECTION – A player who captures an opposing psychologist recovers a piece of his that is currently captured (if any). The piece comes back on the board at the node previously occupied by the psychologist.

Contraindications

1. chronic migraine
2. allergy to abstraction and reflexion
3. negative hyper-sensibility to any component of the game

Latest revision // Awards

First version August 2001, last revision September 2007, Copyleft 2008 GaalN. ALPHA won in 2008 the international competition of the Centre Natonal du Jeu in Paris (<http://ludothèque.com>).

Laboratory

GaalN – PORTUGAL
tel : (+351) 96.53.777.00
mail : gaaln@cesium-133.net