



The Minor Arcana of *Tarot de Marseille* deck (here, the Camoin-Jodorowsky edition from 1471/1997) provides an excellent occasion to study *game-transition*: that is, the passage from one level of game to another. The Minor Arcana contains 56 cards, 4 suits of 14 cards each. As the informed reader will recall the handout [GAME-SHIFTERS](#) features the case of a class of 28 gathered in 8 session in non-repetitive groups of 4. Again the sum is 56.

As we have seen in the last handout, the Tarot can be seen as an equivalent of a mousetrap in card-games: that is, the Tarot as a dual game—featuring two loosely connected decks—where the Major Arcana may be seen as a game within a game in the Minor Arcana; in which the former is seen within the latter, as a set of **22** differentiated trump-cards (with a highly loaded symbolism): 21 numbered from **I** to **XXI** and one *unnumbered* (Le Mat/The Fool). Seen in this way, the Major Arcana is a differentiated liminal space contained by the Minor Arcana (which is more mundane).

A game-within-the game. Or, as played: a stage within the stage. Strangely—or, rather, consistently—the points in the game are *not* integers (whole numbers), but is counted in *half* points: as though the system of the count was shared half-and-half between the two games (the major and minor arcana): “Kings of any suit are worth 4.5 points, while queens are worth 3.5, knights are 2.5, and Jacks are 1.5 points. Non-suited cards are called trump cards: The 1 of trump (or The Magician), the 21 of trump (The World), and the Fool card are considered honor cards, and they’re also worth 4.5 points, respectively. All other trump cards have a value of 0.5.” Cf, *mental floss* [link](#).



The Fool either belongs to both card-decks that are mousetrapped in a Marseille Tarot—the Minor and the Major Arcana—or to neither. The Bateleur/Magician is numbered I and the world /Le Monde numbered 21. The first and last in the Major Arcana. The 3 honour cards.

In sum, the points collected for the Major Arcana is 22. And for the Minor Arcana it is $12 \times 4 = 48$. While playing the gamers can make a set of rule-based wagers. For these there a certain bonuses, when successful, and fines when unsuccessful: the wagers are called *petit*, *handful* and *slam*. The bids can be multiplied: small and guard with/out. Needless to say the players need a ledger to take notes while playing. In the final count, the players need **56** card points to go in balance and not to collect a debt. Here the honour-cards play a role, since one needs 51 points with one honour-card, 41 with two honour-cards and 36 with three honour-cards.

The correspondence between the level card-points **56** and the number of cards in the Minor Arcana (**4 X 14 = 56**), is one of many examples in the card-and-game design, in which *volume of the count* and the *structure of the game* correspond. But, as Spinoza pointed out in *Ethica*, *thought* and *extension* are two attributes that cannot be conflated, nor derived from one another. Moreover, the dual game that mousetraps the Major Arcana within the Minor Arcana, constitutes a metaphor of the forays from the real, among the ranks of the mundane and the game itself learns.

So, amidst the wagers, exchange-rates and multiplications across the two games, there is something else than the a zero-sum game in the sense that the points around the table with four players should add to zero (or, the number of games/round played is fixed in advance). The taker—who is the one in each round who wages to bid—not only plays against the other players, but against the game itself. Of course, this can be said about any game. But the French Tarot is a striking example of how the affordance of the game to take this part is designed *into* the game.

Accordingly, there are three obvious lines of questioning that emerge from this game: **a)** do active models [non repetitious series] allow one to take interest and study something that one is part of? And following this: **b)** is it possible to seek distinction in gaming such that you are not only playing against the other players, but against the game [as an alternating ally, adversary and teacher]? **c)** Can we envisage the existence of a game in which one bets not only against the players and the game, but also against reality? This is an attempt to reframe the use of Tarot for divination.

For if we look at occultists that were contemporaries of the Tarot-game—such as [Agrippa von Nettesheim](#)—they are caught up in the us onslaught of events: *in medias res*. A military officer, a friend of Albrecht Dürer and an adept of natural philosophy (which, at the time, was called magick). The mousetrap structure of the Tarot Game (presumably before William Shakespeare’s mousetrap in Hamlet) allows to telescope into the game, through a distributed intelligence, unto the real and back. What is mysterious is rather why the Major Arcana was isolated for such use?

If you look closely at the lineup from the Minor Arcana [recto]—after being impressed of how the swords form wheels that seem to grow denser from left to right, before exploding into the picture cards—you will notice the more subtle evolution of the the numbering of the the cards from top to bottom: while the simplified Roman numerals used in the count of each suit, are turned outwards on the swords- and rods-suits, they are turned inwards on the cups-suit, and do not appear at all on the pentacle suit: as though the count was given by the instances of the pentacles *themselves*.

So, the pentacles suit is not numbered at all, or it features a numbering of its own, since they are like coins. And we are therefore moving from the instances of the count—swords and rods—to the substance/essence of the count (cups), to the count itself (pentacles). Featuring, as the alert



reader will have already seen, as yet another instance of the *same* (sword-wheels growing), *similar* (rods that are numbered in the same way), *different* (the numbers are turned 180° in the count of the *cups*) and *other* (there are no numbers at all, and the instances of the *pentacles*, in their distributed intelligence, is the count itself). It is pervasive: from both sides, in the middle.

If we claim that the *same*, *similar*, *different* and *other* will articulate articulate affective affinities differently than with Klein groups—defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss as a term, its opposite and their inversions—where the point of departure is opposition and its subsequent mitigation. Which might be the name and game of the identity-polarisation that we are living right now, calling on politeness anew.

In the French Tarot card-game the Major Arcana features a game within the game: a *mousetrap*. That is, a contraction allowing to reveal the turgid about the first game level, what is going on around the table and in life. As a tentative explanation of the later use to Tarot for divination. A fiction machine by metalepsis.