



How to Interpret the LUNAR NODES by Dane Rudhyar

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Part One

The Lunar Nodes in Natal Astrology

What is called in astrology the lunar nodes are the two ends of the line of intersection between the plane of the ecliptic (i.e., the plane of the earth's yearly revolution around the Sun) and the plane of the Moon's monthly revolution around the earth. The zodiacal signs and degrees exist on the ecliptic plane, and the two points at which the Moon's plane intersects the zodiac are indicated by the degrees (i.e., the longitude) of the Moon's nodes. These two points, being the ends of a line, must obviously be in opposition to each other; thus, if the North Lunar Node is at 10° Aries, the South Lunar

Node has to be at 10° Libra. I mention this merely because an ephemeris mentions only the zodiacal position of the North Lunar Node. This position actually is a "mean position"; but as the nodes are not actual, concrete entities but refer to the interaction of two cycles — the lunar month and the solar year — the mean position of the nodes seems to be more significant than their slightly different actual position.

The line of the lunar nodes, which I shall call the nodal axis, keeps shifting along the zodiac. It makes a complete revolution in 18 to 19 years. Hence, if a person is born when the North Lunar Node was at 21° Pisces, some 18 and two-thirds years later, the North Lunar Node will return to the same position. About nine years after birth, the North Lunar Node reaches the position which the South Node had at birth.

The motion of the nodes refers to the factor of celestial latitude. At the North Lunar Node, the Moon passes from the hemisphere of south latitude (i.e., south of the plane of the ecliptic) to that of north latitude; and the opposite occurs at the South Node. The entire nodal cycle of the Moon is said to begin at the North Node. Because our civilization and its traditions give a symbolic positive and spiritual meaning to the northern hemisphere and the north pole, the North Lunar Node is given an equally positive meaning, for it marks the entrance of the Moon into the regions of northern latitude. At the South Lunar Node, the Moon leaves these regions and begins to have a southern latitude. The lunar nodes are, therefore, the points at which the Moon has latitude 0 degrees. This can be checked in the ephemeris by comparing the zodiacal position of the North Lunar Node and the zodiacal position of the Moon on the day this Moon is shown to have "latitude 0° North" (column marked "Lat").

I shall deal with the motion of the lunar nodes and the 19-year cycle it produces in a Part Two of this article. What we must first clearly understand is the meaning of the nodal axis in birth-charts and of the symbolic division of a birth-chart into two halves by this axis. It is an important subject, particularly at the level of a psychological interpretation of the natal chart of an individual person.

The Meaning of the Nodes

As the Moon reaches its North Node and enters the area of north latitude, it is as if it were opening itself to cosmic or spiritual influences symbolically represented by the North Pole and, more specifically, the pole star. Thus, the North Lunar Node represents the point of intake of spiritual cosmic energies; and it was called the "Dragon's Head" — the nodal axis being symbolized by a dragon. The South Lunar Node was the "Dragon's Tail." From a more strictly biological and functional point of view, the North Lunar Node refers to the

mouth of an animal and the South Lunar Node to the organs of evacuation, which means both the anus and the procreative organs from which the seed goes forth.

The fact that the South Lunar Node refers not only to the point of excretion of waste materials, but also to the release of seed materials (fecundated or not) is still not understood by most astrologers today, though I have stressed it for some thirty-two years. I recall how I came to realize this fact when studying [Richard Wagner's birth-chart](#) and finding the South Node in his tenth house. Surely, I felt, this often-called "point of self-undoing" does not have a logical place in the house referring to the professional life of this great genius whose works have brought to him social immortality and influenced countless millions of human beings. Then it suddenly came to me that if the South Node truly represents a function of evacuation or release, procreation at the biological level and artistic creation at the cultural level constitute also a process of release of materials which the organism seeks instinctively to eliminate.

French composer Saint-Saens used to say: "I compose just like an apple tree produces apples." The true creative artist releases almost automatically art products which his organism produces spontaneously and of which he seeks to get rid. He acts in relation to his culture or to a special group of people constituting his potential public as a male fecundating a female. The biological or ideological sperm is evacuated; and, if it is not, frustration and tension are usually the results — unless the person is a yogi, who, according to a traditional process, is able to "transmute" his seed into spiritual energy, in which case we can see at work the symbolism of the great serpent who swallows his own tail.

This South Lunar Node interpretation agrees as well with what occurs in the monthly cycle of women. The ovum is released every month at the South Node of the female body, but it is not fecundated. It is waste material, menstruation; and its frequent discomfort or cramps is a South Node phenomenon, just as is the daily process of excretion.

The essential fact is that these South Node processes are **automatic**; they should demand no effort if human beings lived natural and healthful lives. But also they have no **personal** meaning unless the organism — biologically or emotionally — is disturbed, tense, and under psychological pressures. The great artist or philosopher, in times of cultural harmony in a steady society, releases his mental-cultural "seed" naturally into an expectant and receptive public with whom communication is easy, smooth, and elating. He is the fecundator of his race.

However, this fecundation, just because it is spontaneous and nearly

automatic, may make of him a "sacrifice" to humanity. He pours of himself unceasingly into his community; and he has, therefore, very little left **for his own personal growth and spiritual transformation**. In that sense, this South Node activity is actually a form of "self-undoing." Wagner remained until his death a rather unregenerated personality. I have known, in my early youth, the great French sculptor, August Rodin (I was for a brief period his secretary); and he was indeed in daily contacts a cantankerous old man who treated his son very badly. Many a genius is so enthralled by his creative activity that it becomes truly a spiritually self-defeating process — just as are all automatic processes and all activities and capacities which one takes for granted. In another sense, the "Don Juan" figure of the legend is a South Lunar Node polarized person.

Nevertheless, one has to be very careful not to give a necessarily negative meaning to the South Lunar ode in a birth-chart, especially **in terms of events**. It may refer in any case to a sort of "bondage" — but it is often a very special type of bondage; it may mean the fulfillment of a racial **karma**, a kind of sacrificial offering of self to humanity. At this point of the birth-chart, the past compels; but the outcome may be magnificent in terms of social or cultural results. If one believes in reincarnation, one can say that a capacity developed under stress through past incarnations now produces automatically splendid results; and this may apply to a statesman or inventor, as well as to a creative artist — in all cases, to what we call, often without discrimination, "genius."

If genius implies a kind of automatism — however difficult the conditions of the creative act may be if society is not receptive — talent by contrast demands effort. So does good assimilation of food require the effort of mastication. At the North Node — the symbolical mouth — one ingests food, whether it be physical or ideological. To eat well, which means prolonged chewing, is a conscious, deliberate activity. It requires a choice, a selective process. At the North Node, an individual builds himself up. He does not give out; he takes in. But what he takes in can poison him! He may be careless or greedy in his choice of food. If he lives in our present-day society, he has a hard struggle — if he wants to eat only healthful and unadulterated foodstuffs — and this is true at the intellectual-cultural level as well as that of body nourishment. This is the tragedy of our age.

The Nodal Axis in the Birth-Chart

The Moon's nodal axis has been said to be an "axis of fate"; and much of personal fate indeed is a function of the person's ability to make the best of the demands and opportunities of life and society around him. Perhaps more

than any other factor in a birth-chart, this axis deals with the relationship in depth of the individual to his environment. It deals with the give and take experienced by a man in relation to the "field" in which his existence unfolds and with the way he is able to actualize his birth potential underneath all surface events.

This is where what are unfortunately termed "fate" and "free will" interplay. No individual is totally free or totally compelled. The Existentialistic philosophy of French thinker Jean-Paul Sartre, in its glorification of an absolute and unconditional freedom, makes no sense at all; it is basically a doctrine of compensation for despair — truly a South Node philosophy tragically seeking to "raise itself by its bootstraps" and passionately, irrationally to deny man's sense of being totally compelled by a disintegrating civilization, the absurdity of which "nauseates" the oversensitive and overly intellectualized, lonely individual.

The nodal axis divided the birth-chart into two equal halves; so, of course, do the natal horizon and natal meridian. Much has been said concerning the respective characters of the eastern, western, above-the-horizon, and below-the-horizon hemispheres of a chart; the preponderance or absence of planets in each of these hemispheres has been given meanings of various kinds. A similar approach can be used with reference to the Moon's nodal axis, as Marc Jones once pointed out and as I stated in my book **Astrology of Personality** in 1936.

If one does so, however, one should realize that the whole chart is being looked at in terms of the Moon's basic function. This function refers to man's capacity for intelligent adjustment to his environment for the purpose of gaining a maximum (or optimum) of well-being and happiness or comfort. The Moon, by revolving constantly around the earth, generates, one might say, a protective electromagnetic envelope (or shield) as well as **focusing** and **distributing** the energies of the Sun and the planets upon our globe and all that lives on its surface.

What the ancient astrologers called the "sublunar sphere" is a vast cosmic field defined and outlined by the cyclic monthly revolution of the Moon. It resembles a kind of matrix; and as such, it gave rise to the connection between the Moon and motherhood. The mother sees to it that her still helpless infant is protected from injurious impacts and that his needs are satisfied. The baby becomes the center of her cyclic daily activities, and she attends first of all to his feeding and elimination — i.e., to his physiological nodal axis.

Later on, as the child matures into the a self-reliant adult, he normally develops his own Moon function. He is supposed to find his own individual

mode of adjustment to everyday life's challenges and opportunities. There are times when new powers or capacities for adaptation are built; others, when these powers are put to work and energies released. However, an individual is born with the Moon either in northern or southern celestial latitude; this means on one side or the other of its nodal axis.

A nodal hemisphere begins at the Moon's North Node and progresses in the natural order of zodiacal signs (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc.). **Lyndon Johnson**, has his North Node at 1°41' Cancer; his natal Moon at 9°8' Virgo has a very high north latitude. It is, thus, located in the North Node hemisphere. His basic lunar emphasis throughout his life is on the building of new faculties or power of control over his environment. If one adds to this the massing of Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Moon, and Mercury in his first house and his "New Moon" type of personality, one can readily understand his insistent and expansive ego, his over-eagerness to stress "greatness" — first of all in himself — and, therefore, his extreme sensitiveness to criticism. He seems to be at the start of a new cycle, building himself up, while being raised to a pinnacle of power by a strong wave of destiny.

In subtle contrast to our President's Moon situation, we find **Charles de Gaulle's** natal Moon in near maximal southern latitude. The French autocratic leader, however, is what he is in terms of the past — his country's past, perhaps also his own (as a spiritual entity possibly incarnated previously in a position of political power). He has not been striving overeagerly to build up power. He has always taken for granted his identification with France's greatness. He sees himself and acts as fecundator and savior of his people. He may seem to have a fantastic ego; but, in a real sense, it is a superpersonal ego — and he **has** two or three times saved France from chaos.

Lenin also had a south latitude Moon, but **Stalin** and Khrushchev had a north latitude Moon — and so have the majority of the national leaders now living. **Bismarck**, founder of the German Empire, had a south latitude Moon, but **Hitler's** natal Moon was in northern latitude. The great Hindu mystic, **Ramakrishna**, and his equally great disciple, **Vivekananda**, founder of the modern Vedanta Movement, were both with the Moon in a southern latitude; so was **Sri Aurobindo**, a leader in the cause of India's freedom — yogi, philosopher, poet — but **Gandhi** had his Moon in northern latitude.

Such a lunar position is obviously only one indication out of many; but it is interesting to see the predominance of natal Moons in northern latitudes among national figures, which would seem to bring those who do not have this position into a special class. I believe that the factor of planetary latitude has been studied too little and might reveal a good deal. A preponderance of planets in northern or southern latitude may prove to be quite significant, but

the indication would be one dealing with subtle factors of psychology or even parapsychology.

Because of the present way in which our astrological charts are made, it is much easier to see which planets are in which of the two hemispheres defined by the Moon's nodes' axis; and the results can be very interesting. The North Node hemisphere (starting, I repeat, with the North Node and counting from that degree in the natural order of zodiacal signs) can be said to represent the zone of assimilation of planetary energies channeled and distributed upon the earth by the Moon — thus, anabolic, building-up activity. The other hemisphere, from South to North Node, is, by contrast, a zone either of positive release of seed elements (procreatively or creatively) or of negative letting go of unassimilated or unused products.

In **President Johnson's chart**, Saturn and Uranus belong to the South Node hemisphere; as both are also the only planets west of the meridian and both are retrograde, this indicates a definite psychological complex which led to a very strong compensatory activity, represented by the planets in Leo and Virgo in the first house. Moreover, Uranus and Saturn are squaring each other and Uranus opposes a Neptune-Venus conjunction. This is the background of our President's feeling of "greatness" — or, one might say, the dynamo that spurs him on to take a dynamic, self-reliant role.

His father evidently had much to do with the situation. Interestingly enough, in de Gaulle's chart, Uranus and Saturn, plus the Sun and Mercury, are in the North Node hemisphere and east of the meridian. The two leaders have basically opposite conditionings, and Johnson's Saturn in conjunction with de Gaulle's Moon does the latter no good. **President Kennedy** had a southern latitude Moon, and his tragic conjunction of Saturn and Neptune in his tenth house stood alone with the Moon in the South Node hemisphere. He "released" himself and his dreams into his public office; and his death and funeral, witnessed by the whole world through T.V., acquired the sense of a sacrificial ritual. One sometimes wonders if the exact conditions of the assassination will ever be known. Perhaps Kennedy's death may have been a karmic atonement for some dramatic failure in a previous cycle of existence.

The two houses of the birth-chart which the nodal axis links are perhaps the most important factors to consider in a study of the relationship of this axis to the whole chart; but here one must be careful not to attribute to the South Node an always negative meaning. In President Johnson's chart, the South Node is located at the second degree of Capricorn, in his fifth house. Perhaps an extreme of self-expression and risk taking is the President's "self-undoing"; it seems to be his "line of least resistance." Yet with Uranus also in this fifth house, it may be in this manner that his particular "genius" has to

manifest. He may have to make greater efforts in finding both his true friends and his real ideals; yet he needs these in order to act constructively.

As in the case of the position of any astrological axis, one can never separate the North Node from the South Node. What one deals with in terms of house positions is **the relationship between two areas of experience.**

To give consideration to only the North Node makes little sense. The problem is how to integrate the meanings resulting from the positions of two opposite points in opposite houses — and, of course, in opposite signs also. Such a type of integration requires a kind of psychological understanding which is most needed in life; and the intelligent study of astrology can help in developing such an understanding.

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