

1. What else is there?

There are a number of other points that are commonly used in an astrological chart in addition to the Ascendant, Descendant, Sun, Moon and planets. Some have a physical reality (dwarf planets, asteroids, centaurs, fixed stars) and others are calculated points (such as the part of fortune) or relate to astronomical phenomena (the moon's nodes).

Although we are not going to do more than touch on the myriad of other points you may find in an astrological chart, there are a few that you will see on a fairly regular basis. In the following classes for the Fundamentals certificate, you will have the chance to delve deeper into the points presented here and discover other points regularly used by different schools of astrology.

1.1. And what makes a planet?

Until the 19th Century, the word planet, while never specifically defined, made a good working term. In the 1990's, as astronomers found more and more objects in our solar system and beyond, they began to argue over where to draw the boundary line for the term "planet." The discovery of Eris was the final straw. Astronomers knew there were still more Trans-Neptunian objects to be found. And so they decided it was time to actually define the word.

In 2006, at a spirited meeting of the IAU, astronomers agreed on a definition based on the dynamics of the object (rather than physical characteristics):

A planet

- Orbits a Sun
- Is massive enough for gravity to make it (nearly) round
- Has cleared its orbit of debris

A dwarf planet meets the first two criteria, but not the third. Thus Pluto lost its place as the 9th planet. There are still ongoing arguments (especially after the NASA's New Horizons space craft made its flight past Pluto in July 2015).

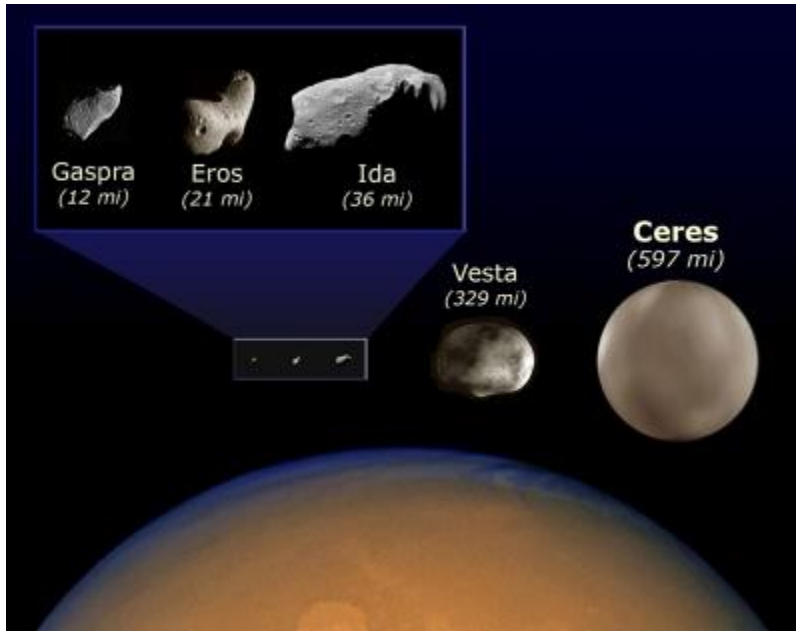
For an interesting look at the entire controversy, read *How I Killed Pluto and Why It Had It Coming* by Mike Brown.

2. Minor Planetary Bodies

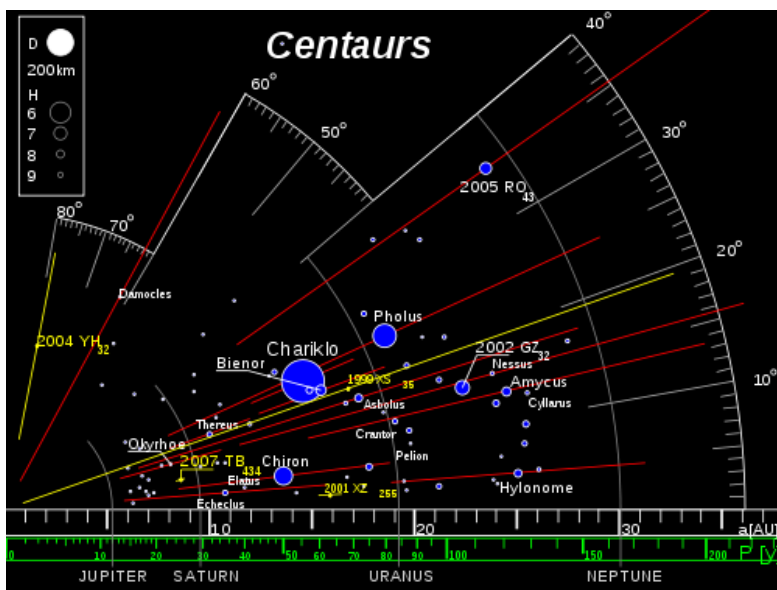
In addition to the two lights, 7 planets and the dwarf planet Pluto, there are many additional minor planetary bodies used by different astrologers. One difference between planets/dwarf planets and asteroids or centaurs is a question of stability. Asteroids and

centaurs are much smaller than the planets and dwarf planets. They also orbit together and so there is a far greater chance of being hit by another body and knocked out of their current orbit.

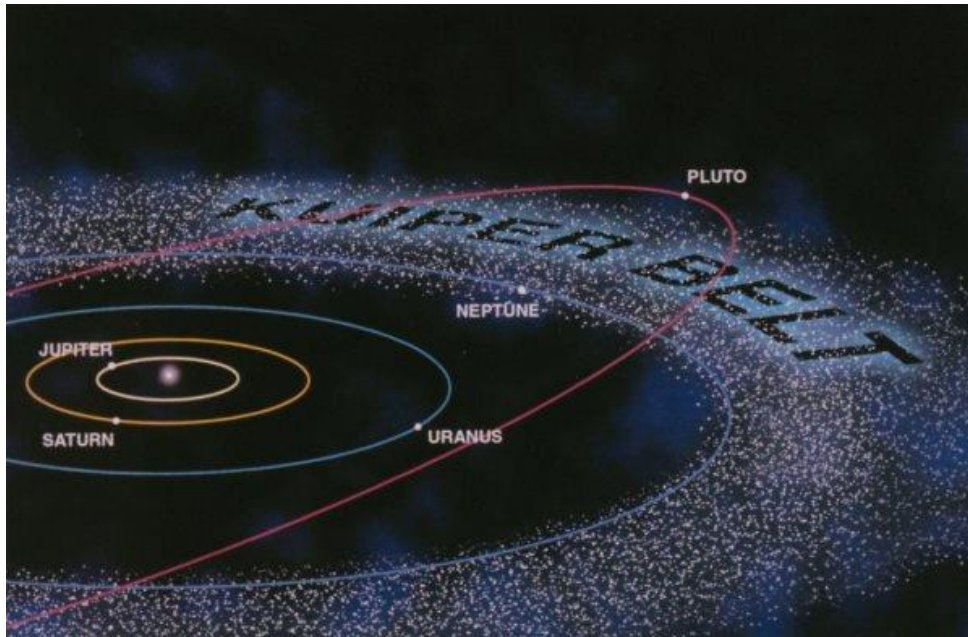
Asteroids: The primary asteroid belt is found between Mars and Jupiter. Ceres is the largest of the asteroids (she has about 1/4 the mass of this main asteroid belt) and is considered a dwarf planet.



Asteroids & Centaurs: Other asteroids are found between Jupiter and Neptune. Some of these have been given the name of centaur because they have tails like comets, so they combine different qualities. Chiron is found in this group.

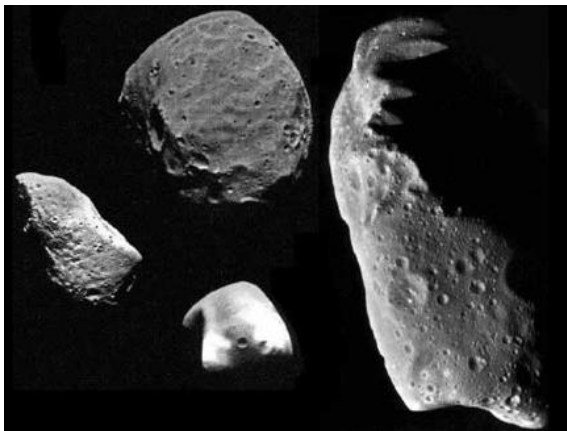


Kuiper Belt Objects: In the outer reaches of the solar system, where Pluto is located, you have the Kuiper belt. The dwarf planets Pluto, Eris, Haumea and Makemake are all found in the Kuiper belt. Most of the objects here do not have the regular orbits found with the regular planets. They are often very elongated or significantly off from the main path of the ecliptic.



2. Minor Planetary Bodies

2.1. Asteroids



As mentioned before, asteroids are heavenly bodies orbiting between Jupiter and Mars. Centaurs are also referred to as asteroids, but they orbit between Jupiter and Neptune. Because asteroids and centaurs tend to be interpreted in the same manner as the planets, it seems appropriate to introduce them here. We cannot do so without also mentioning that this is a controversial topic.

Asteroids came into use in the 1970's. Some astrologers swear by them and find the symbolism enriches their chart interpretation. Others ignore them and question their value, in part because they are very small physical bodies compared to the planets and dwarf planets; there are thousands and thousands of them so where do you draw the line; and how do you decide which myth to use in describing their symbolism.

In general, those who do use them frequently focus only on exact conjunctions (asteroids found within 1 degree of a planet or the ascendant) and the synchronicity of the symbolism with the individual's life.

First, the disclaimers. In the 1980s, asteroid popularizers like Demetra George and Lee Lehman, were concerned and suspicious that the hesitancy related to their adoption by the astrological community has had a substantial sexist component: since so many of the asteroid names were of women, it did seem that this was part of the resistance.

We are simply introducing asteroids in this class; you will have a chance to go into more depth in later classes. So do not feel you need to make a final decision on whether or not to use them or how to interpret them at this point. But when you find books or astrological sites referencing the asteroids, you might consider:

- Even after considerable lobbying by such people as Demetra George, Jacob Schwartz, Leigh Weston, and Emma Bell Donath over the last 35 years, only a minority of astrologers appear to use the asteroids on a regular basis.
- A much larger number of astrologers use Chiron (even though Ceres is the largest asteroid and is now categorized as a dwarf planet), ranging from referring to it either as or as if it were a planet, sometimes simultaneously either rejecting or minimizing the rest of the asteroids.
- A very small number of people, primarily in Europe, use the full set of Centaurs.
- Classical Western and Vedic astrologers do not use the asteroids, at least when they are operating within those systems.
- One of the principal arguments against the asteroids is the question of “where do you draw the line.” There are at least a couple hundred thousand asteroids with diameters larger than 3 feet, and between 4,000 and 10,000 listed in astrological ephemerides. What has become increasingly apparent is that there is no meaningful limit to the possible number of asteroids apart from the lower size limit of what can be observed through a telescope. Adding so many bodies into a delineation fundamentally changes the nature of the astrological interpretation.
- On the other hand, if the symbolism “works,” how can you justify excluding it?

- You can always work with only groups of bodies at one time, like the common name asteroids, the Apollo asteroids, the Greek goddess asteroids, or the Centaurs.

2. Minor Planetary Bodies

2.2. Chiron the Centaur



Many astrologers who do not normally use asteroids, will still use Chiron, a small asteroid with a comet-like tail between Jupiter and Neptune that was discovered in 1977. It seemed very telling that, once Chiron was discovered, its adoption by the astrological community was much more immediate and complete than with the other asteroids. Was it that it had a male name or because it had a compelling mythology that resonated with popular concerns?

It is too simplistic to assume that the “gender” of the name of the deity for which Chiron was named is the whole story. The image of the “wounded healer” is a powerful one, both within a Jungian context, and a New Age one. The Jungian angle is certainly confirmed by the enthusiasm by Karen Hamaker-Zondag, not only for Chiron, but for the rest of the Centaurs. For that was part of the later fall-out: where once Chiron was classified as an asteroid, then a burned-out comet, now it is classified as a Centaur asteroid and comet (because it has a cometary tail). Karen’s publishing company published the first astrological ephemeris of the Centaurs, and interestingly, astrologers have worked with astronomers on the naming of the Centaurs.

Chiron is smaller than at least 30 of the other asteroids; it is not the largest centaur and is considerably smaller than the newly discovered dwarf planets. So why has Chiron’s use become so widespread with modern astrologers? Well, the only explanation I have is that its symbolism is too hard to resist. The short phrase for Chiron is the “Wounded Healer” based on Greek mythology. Chiron was considered an intelligent and civilized centaur known for his medical skill. He was accidentally wounded by his own hand with a poisoned arrow. Unable to heal himself, he exchanged his immortality for the life of Prometheus, which allowed mankind to obtain the use of fire.

2. Minor Planetary Bodies

2.3. Asteroid or Dwarf?



Ceres, the largest of all the asteroids, is also considered a dwarf planet. As with all the names borrowed from mythology, there are variations associated with the myths surrounding Ceres. In ancient Roman religion, Ceres was a goddess of agriculture, grain crops (we get the word "cereal" from Ceres), marriage, funeral rites, fertility and motherly relationships. Many of the myths surrounding her come from Demeter, the Greek goddess. The key myth is the abduction of her daughter, Persephone, by Hades/Pluto, the god of the underworld. Demeter withdrew her gifts plunging the world into barren winter until she was able to gain the return of Persephone.



The next three asteroids (in order of size) include Pallas, Vesta and Juno.

2. Minor Planetary Bodies

2.4. Pluto and the Dwarfs

About Pluto: Most of us grew up with the notion that there were 9 planets – which included Pluto. That has now changed - at least among astronomers.

Note: Because there is almost a century of astrological work on Pluto as a planet and a strong attachment to the symbolism of Pluto, we are continuing to use Pluto (but for now, not the other dwarf planets) in our astrological discussion. It remains to be seen whether a similar strong attachment will form for the other dwarf planets.

By all measures, Pluto was recognized as an unusual object virtually from its discovery. Its extremely eccentric orbit marked it as different, especially when it was recognized as extending within the orbit of Neptune. Later, Pluto was recognized to be the first Kuiper Belt object to be discovered. The Kuiper Belt is a

zone which also is the far end of the orbits of the short-period comets. Until 2003, Pluto was the largest known Kuiper Belt object (KBO), and then a larger body was found. The object 2003 UB313 (originally nicknamed “Xena” and now called “Eris”) was discovered by Michael Brown and his team on October 21, 2003. This called the status of Pluto into question.

Dwarf Planets and Plutoids. After a significant amount of debate, on August 24, 2006, astronomers voted to “demote” Pluto to a dwarf planet. The definition of a dwarf planet is a planetary body that is massive enough to be rounded by its own gravity (near-spherical in shape), but has not cleared the space within its orbit of other debris and small planetesimals, and it is not a satellite of another planet.



The first 5 dwarf planets that were accepted and named are: Eris, Pluto, Makemake, Haumea and Ceres. Dwarf planets in the Kuiperbelt are also referred to as plutoids (a trans-Neptunian dwarf planet). This includes Eris, Pluto, Makemake & Haumea. Ceres, an asteroid orbiting between Mars and Jupiter, is the only asteroid classified as a dwarf planet.

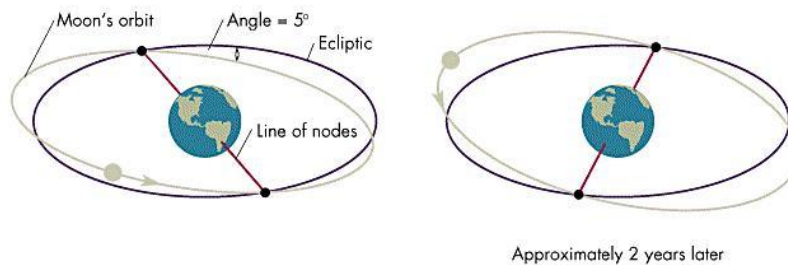
Makemake, formerly known as (136472) 2005 FY9 (discovered by Michael Brown on March 31, 2005 and given the nickname the “Easter Bunny”) was formally given its name by the IAU in mid-2008. Other KBO (Kuiper Belt Objects) are now in the process of being qualified as a dwarf planet by the IAU and given official names. Sedna, discovered in 2003, has a name but is still only a dwarf planet candidate.

At the moment, there are approximately 42 plutoids that may get dwarf planet status. Most of these are in the Kuiper belt.

Parenthetically, Michael E. Brown, part of the team that discovered Eris, made a very interesting statement to the New York Times on August 28, 2005: “[He] said he has been peppered with inquiries from astrologers seeking to know the exact moment he made his observation. Dr. Brown, a professor of planetary astronomy at the California Institute of Technology, subsequently posted the time of discovery on his Web page for their benefit, he said, because he has always appreciated astrologers' enthusiasm for the heavens. 'The astronomical world frequently sits

around and bickers," he said. "It's nice to see a group sit around and take pleasure in new discoveries."

3. The Moon's Nodes



The Moon's nodes are created by the mathematics of the orbits of the Sun, Earth and Moon. They are not a physical object like a planet or asteroid. They represent the point where the orbit of the Moon around the earth intersects with the ecliptic (the orbit of the earth around the

Sun).

All planets have nodes. But the Moon's nodes are the ones most often used by astrologers. In interpretation, the North Node (Dragon's head or Rahu in Vedic astrology) and the South Node (Dragon's Tail or Ketu in Vedic astrology) tend to be interpreted in the same manner as planets, their symbolism modified by sign, house and aspect.

What are the Moon's Nodes?

Just as the *ecliptic* system describes a plane, so too does the orbit of the Moon around the earth. But the moon's orbit is not on the same plane as the ecliptic, instead it is inclined at an average angle of 5 degrees 2 minutes to 5 degrees 8 minutes. The Moon's nodes are the point at which these two planes intersect.

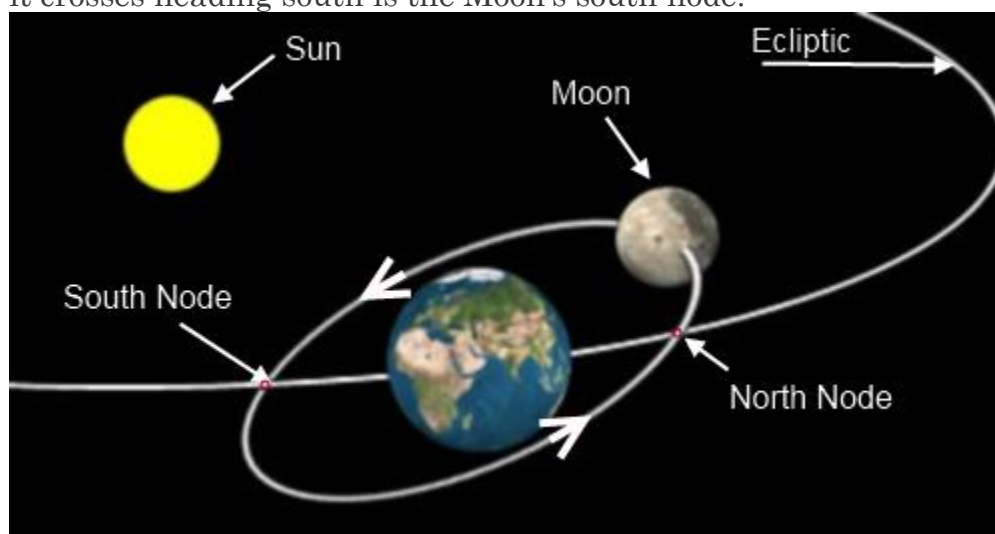
As you can see in the image below, the Moon spends half its time above and half below the celestial horizon. The point where the Moon crosses the ecliptic moving from South to North Celestial Latitude is the North Node, while the point where it crosses moving from North back to South Celestial Latitude is the South Node.

(Images are from http://ircamera.as.arizona.edu/astr_250/Lectures/LECTURE_01.HTM which has some other interesting information on astronomical coordinate systems.)

3. The Moon's Nodes

3.1. North vs South Node

Where the Moon crosses the Ecliptic heading north is the Moon's north node. Where it crosses heading south is the Moon's south node.



Although we commonly say the Moon orbits the earth, this is not right astronomically. Their common center of gravity--the barycenter--does not lie at the precise center of the Earth, but about three-quarters of the way from Earth's center to its surface. So, the Earth wobbles as the Moon orbits it. The moon's wobble also means the nodes move backward; in other words, they move (99% of the time) in a retrograde motion along the zodiac. **This means the Nodes appear to move clockwise in the chart, instead of counter-clockwise.** The nodes complete a full circle in approximately 18.6 years.

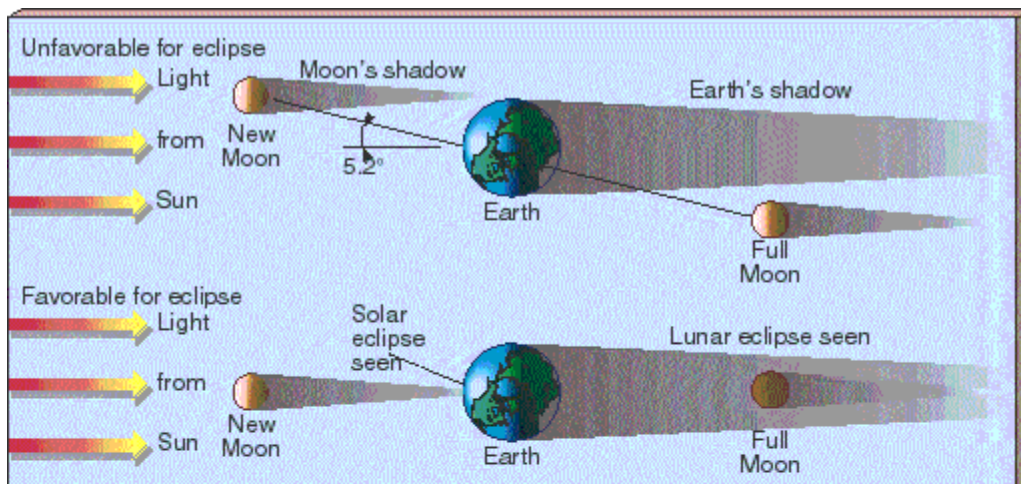
True vs. Mean Node

When you use astrological software, you have the choice of the true vs. the mean node for the moon. The true node follows the astronomy - and takes the barycenter of the orbit for the Moon and Earth as it is - closer to the surface of the earth than the center. The mean node is simpler - it is a calculation of the average motion. Most astrologers seem to use the mean node. Other's feel it is more important to use the true node based on the astronomy. The difference between these two nodal positions is never more than about 1.5°

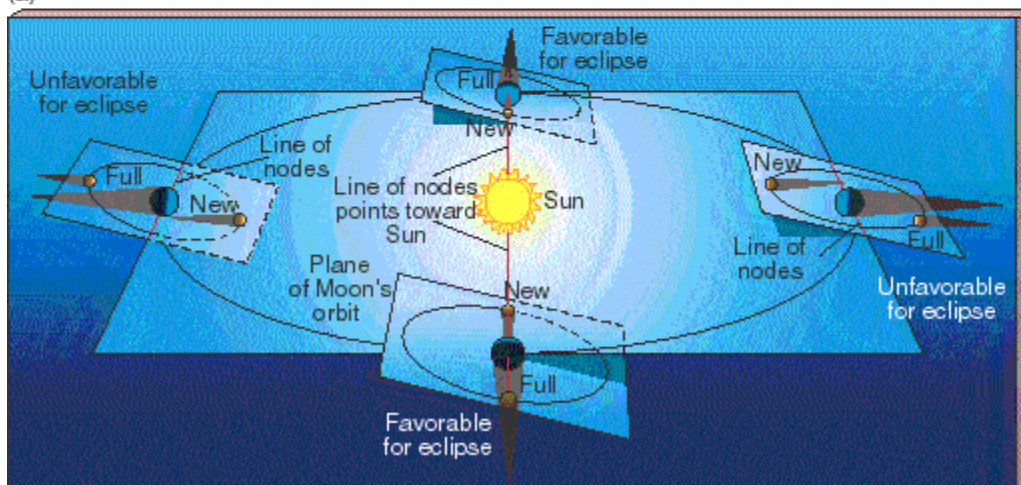
3. The Moon's Nodes

3.2. Eclipses and the Nodes

Astronomically the nodal points are important because twice a year, as the earth travels around the sun and the nodal axis travels around the earth, the nodal axis will line up with the sun. Solar and lunar eclipses occur when there is this alignment AND when there is a new moon (solar eclipse) or a full moon (lunar eclipse).



(a)



(b)

The timing is not exact, but an alignment of the nodal axis and the sun occurs approximately every six months -- approximately because the gravitational interactions of

sun, earth and moon create a wobble in the moon's orbit, similar to the earth's wobble that results in the precession.

3. The Moon's Nodes

3.3. Lunar Nodes - Meaning

The nodes have had a change in meaning, particularly in modern times. One of the important points to keep in mind when interpreting the nodes is that they cannot be separated and must always be viewed in relation to each other.

Hellenistic and Classical Western astrology tended to see the South Node as a malefic and the North Node as possibly benefic. Indian (Jyotish) astrology think both are problematic. Many modern astrologers link Jyotish and Hindu concepts (karma) to Western psychological and spiritual perspectives to place a more positive view on both of the Moon's nodes.

Vettius Valens in the 2nd century used the nodes to calculate length of life and felt that the north node tended to be better than the south node, but only if you have the helpful planets in aspect to them. If it is Saturn or Mars in close aspect, then there are upsets and accusation.

By the time of Guido Bonatti (around 1293), the North Node was considered naturally a benefic because its nature was more like Jupiter and Venus and the South Node was considered to be more like Saturn and Mars. However, there were circumstances when this interpretation was reversed.

William Lilly (in Christian Astrology 1847) held a similar view as Bonatti. But he felt the North Node was better than the south and then says that the ancients say that the North Node is good if conjunct Venus and Jupiter and evil if it is conjunct Saturn or Mars. The South Node, on the other hand was evil when conjunct Venus and Mars and good when conjunct Saturn or Mars.

Through most of the early 1900's, modern astrologers did not generally pay much attention to the nodes. As Hindu astrology (Jyotish) became more known, the nodes garnered more interest. The opinions of Lilly and Bonatti were still used. But theosophical and psychological perspectives were added. Generally, the idea was that the South Node showed the gifts we are born with but are not particularly conscious of, and so they create problems. There was also an obsessive quality to the South Node. The North Node was thought to show the gifts potentially available if you actively work to develop them.

In the mid-to late 1900's, Dane Rudhyar noted the nodes are referred to as an "axis of fate" and stated: "Perhaps more than any other factor in a birth-chart, this axis

deals with the relationship in depth of the individual to his environment." From [*How to Interpret the Lunar Nodes.*](#)

The connection of the nodes to various versions of what was called Evolutionary Astrology started appearing in the early 1960's.

The most recent and popular version of Evolutionary astrology (as developed by Jeffrey Wolf Green and Seven Forrest) uses the nodes and Pluto as entry points to talk about past lives and karma. However, there are some questions not entirely settled in this usage. You will find different answers to these questions depending upon the background of the astrologer. For example: do the nodes represent all past lives, just the most recent, or just those lives that have specific issues related to the current life? Are these lives sequential? Why would the Nodes and Pluto have more influence than all the other planets for an individual, especially the personal planets?

There are also some differences between the Hindu, Buddhist and other Asian religious depictions of karma and the meaning used by Western astrologers. In Hinduism and Buddhism (and there is some difference even between these two religions) karma originally just referred to one's actions. Over time, the idea of one's actions also included the consequences of those actions. But until relatively recently, there was seldom an additional judgment as to whether the actions could be defined as good or bad. The majority of Western astrologers are more influenced by the Christian view where all actions are judged as either good or bad.

Below are some examples of the Asian perspective - the first from Hinduism, the second from Taoism.

"Good and evil of this world of duality are unreal, are spoken of by words, and exist only in the mind."

- Bhagavatam, XI, ch. XXII.

Chinese folk tale:

A man named Sei Weng owned a beautiful mare which was praised far and wide. One day this beautiful horse disappeared. The people of his village offered sympathy to Sei Weng for his great misfortune. Sei Weng said simply, "That's the way it is."

A few days later the lost mare returned, followed by a beautiful wild stallion. The village congratulated Sei Weng for his good fortune. He said, "That's the way it is."

Some time later, Sei Weng's only son, while riding the stallion, fell off and broke his leg. The village people once again expressed their sympathy at Sei Weng's misfortune. Sei Weng again said, "That's the way it is."

Soon thereafter, war broke out and all the young men of the village except Sei Weng's lame son were drafted and were killed in battle. The village people were amazed as Sei Weng's good luck. His son was the only young man left alive in the village. But Sei Weng kept his same attitude: despite all the turmoil, gains and losses, he gave the same reply, "That's the way it is."

As told by Chin-Ning Chu, in "The Asian Mind Game: unlocking the hidden agenda of the Asian business culture -- a westerner's survival manual," New York:Macmillan Publishing Company, page 182. (1991)

4. Calculated Points: Part of Fortune

The Arabic Parts, or Lots, are a series of points based on a calculation between three (and sometimes four) planets. You may have heard the term midpoint described as a sensitive point between two planets, these lots or parts are a more complicated version of that idea.



Part of Fortune: This is actually just the most well-known of an entire set of "Arabian Points," "Parts" or "Lots" that are calculated points based on the angular relationship of various planets and the Ascendant and Midheaven.

The Part of Fortune is calculated as follows:

Day Births: Fortune = Ascendant + Moon - Sun

Night Births: Fortune = Ascendant + Sun - Moon

For years, most people used only the day calculation, in part because in earlier translations of Ptolemy, it appeared he recommended the daytime calculation for everyone. More recent translations of Ptolemy and other classical astrologers have shown this is not the case. Now astrologers know that you need to take into account the sect of the chart: is the sun above (diurnal) or below (nocturnal) the horizon.

According to Robert Hand, who has read (and translated) many of the ancient texts, the Part of Fortune was considered a primary indicator of prosperity in classical times. Quoting from his article at StarIQ

(http://www.astro.com/astrology/in_fortune_e.htm)

In ancient astrology the Ascendant is the primary indicator of the physical body and health. The Moon is also a very important secondary indicator about the body. But there is a difference between them. The Ascendant was considered to be the body at its most physical, material level. The Moon was the living aspect of the body, in fact

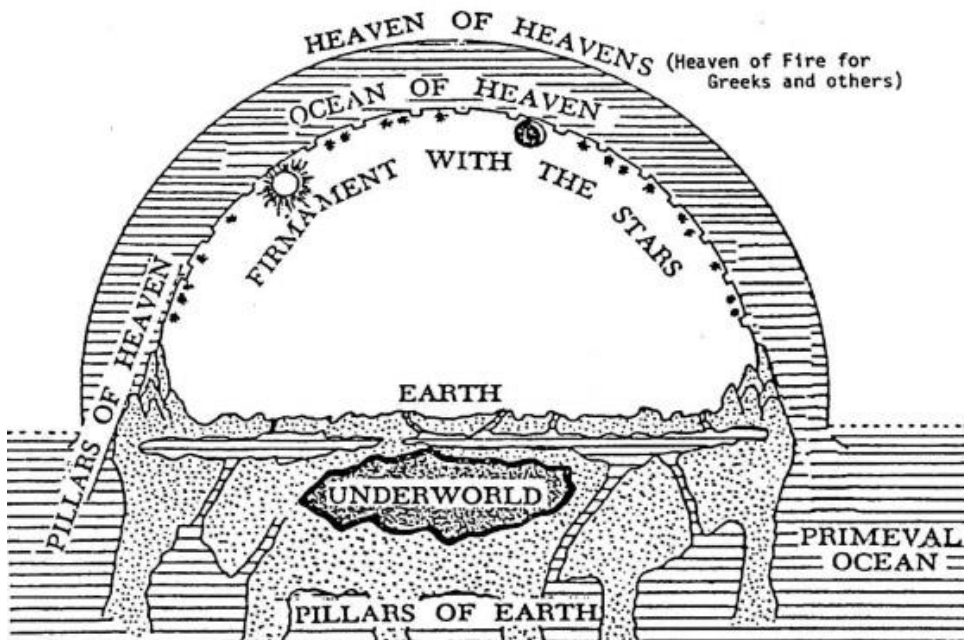
soul, but soul incarnated in a physical body. The Part of Fortune, being composed of both of these along with the Sun, is also an indicator of the living, physical body and its relationships with the physical and social world in which the native lives. Its capacity to signify prosperity comes from this. If the Part of Fortune is in good condition, the relationship between the native and the physical and social world in which he or she lives is one that supports the native and enables the native to live well. If the Part of Fortune is in poor condition, the native has a harder time living in relationship with the world that supports the native. The same can also be said about the relationships of the Part of Fortune and health.

Part of Spirit

If you reverse the calculations, you will find the Part of Spirit. Where the Part of Fortune is more related to the body, the Part of Spirit is related to metaphysical considerations - the purpose for which the soul has incarnated. Another way to think of this is that the Part of Spirit represents our highest potential.

5. Fixed Stars

You may also run into astrologers who use fixed stars. Fixed stars were heavily used in earlier times and more and more modern astrologers are beginning to consider them as well. The fixed stars are particularly bright stars in the ecliptic that have had meanings assigned to them. W103 goes into the meaning and use of the fixed stars in more detail.



The reason we call them the fixed stars (as opposed to the wandering planets) is because they move very slowly - only 1 degree every 72 years.

Some of the more well-known include:

- Regulus at approx. 29 degrees 50 minutes Leo. Associated with Jupiter and Mars. If favorable it is usually associated with success; badly placed: violence.
- Spica at approx. 23 degrees 50 minutes Libra. Associated with Venus and Mars. If well placed, riches; badly placed: unscrupulousness
- Algol at approx. 26 degrees 10 minutes Taurus. Associated with Mars and Saturn. Generally associated with misfortune and violence.