

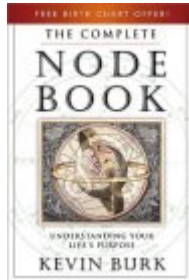
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## A New Look at the Moon's Nodes

by

Kevin Burk

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Excerpt from:

### **The Complete Node Book: Understanding Your Life's Purpose** **Kevin Burk**

*What began as an article in an astrology newsletter back in 1996 became a series of lectures, and finally, in 2003, a full-fledged book.*

*This is the only book on the Moon's Nodes to provide detailed and synthesized interpretations of all 144 possible positions of the Moon's nodes.*

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### **"A New Look at the Nodes"**

The Moon's Nodes are one of the most fundamentally important symbols in Astrology, and also one of the most fundamentally misunderstood. While most Astrologers include the Nodes in their charts, few seem to be particularly comfortable with interpreting them. Pick up any introductory book on Astrology, for example. You'll find no shortage of information on all of the Signs of the Zodiac, and on all of the planets as well. But where most books devote entire chapters to each of the planets and the Signs, the Moon's Nodes are barely mentioned and rarely interpreted. When I began my Astrological studies, I was rather confused about exactly how to interpret and work with the Moon's Nodes, and I was also getting frustrated at the lack of information published on the Nodes. It wasn't until I started taking classes in astrology that I even learned that the Nodes are the transiting eclipse points. Now, I may not have known much about astrology, but even then I knew enough to know that eclipses are extremely important events! I reasoned that if eclipses were so important, then the Moon's Nodes must also be very important, and I set out to uncover everything that I could find that anyone had ever written on the Moon's Nodes. What I found was pretty consistent. The North Node (often referred to as Caput Draconis, the Dragon's Head) is associated with all of the good things that we could possibly experience in our lifetime, including success, advancement, increase, and personal fulfillment. The South Node (just as often referred to as Cauda Draconis, the Dragon's Tail) is associated with huge, heaping amounts of what you would expect to come out of the tail end of a Dragon.

In other words, "South Node: BAD. North Node: GOOD."

To be fair, this sort of approach is more common in the older, more "traditional" astrology sources. The more modern and humanistic approach to astrology tends to take a more enlightened view of the Nodes, in keeping with the trend to re-define the astrological symbols in a more empowering and less fatalistic way. (In other words, "There are no bad planets, only bad experiences of them....and Saturn

is your *friend*." In the more "modern" astrology texts the Nodes get a bit of a face lift. The South Node is promoted from evil incarnate to the point in the chart where we are most likely to follow the path of least resistance, or to rest on our laurels. The South Node is also related to the karma that we are working out in this lifetime. The North Node becomes the process and experiences that we must strive for in order to work off our Karma and grow in this lifetime. In short: "South Node: BAD, North Node: GOOD."

## The Search For A Definition of the Nodes

Value judgments aside, I realized that I still hadn't found any justification for these interpretations. Why do the Moon's Nodes function in the way that they do? How did the Nodes become so closely linked to our spiritual path, our past lives and our karma? Every other symbol in Astrology has some rationale behind its interpretation. We can gain a better understanding of the nature and symbolism of the planets through exploring Greek and Roman mythology. The Signs can be broken down into Polarity, Element and Modality. We can come up with a description of Aries by combining and blending the qualities of the Masculine/Positive Polarity, the Element of Fire, and the Cardinal Modality. Even the aspects can be understood using numerology and harmonics. But what about the Moon's Nodes?

(I should mention at this point, that there is a mythology associated with the Nodes, but it's not from the Western Tradition: it's from India and the Hindu tradition. The Nodes in Vedic astrology do not function in the same way that they do in Western Astrology.)

Since I couldn't find a direct source of information on the Moon's Nodes to help me to build a better understanding of their symbolism, I decided to take a closer look at the Moon's Nodes and see what I could extrapolate myself. The first thing that I did was to look at exactly what the Moon's Nodes are from an astronomical perspective. What I learned is that the Nodes are mathematical points that represent where the orbit of the Moon around the Earth crosses the Ecliptic (which is the apparent path of the Sun around the Earth). The North Node is the point where the Moon's orbit rises above the Ecliptic, and the South Node is the point where the Moon's orbit falls below the Ecliptic. The North Node and the South Node are always exactly opposite each other in the chart.

This may not be quite as obvious as Elements and Modalities, but just this simple physical description of the Moon's Nodes can help us to gain a more complete understanding of what they represent in Astrology.

## The Nodes Are Mathematical Points—They Are Not Physical Bodies

The Nodes are mathematical points; they are not physical bodies. What this means is that the Nodes do not emanate light. The Nodes can *receive* aspects from other planets, but they can not directly influence how a physical body expresses itself.

This also means that the Nodes do not filter the energy of the Signs. With the Nodes, as with the Angles, we have a pure expression of the energy and symbolism of the Signs. Our experience of the energy of Aries, for example, is very different when we are experiencing Venus in Aries than it is when we experience Mars in Aries. The personalities of the planets color the expression of the Signs that they visit. The Nodes, however, do not change how the Signs are expressed or experienced.

## The Nodes Are Related To The Moon, The Sun And The Ecliptic

The Nodes are the most closely related to the symbolism and processes of the Moon because they represent points on the Moon's orbit around the Earth. But the Nodes also relate to the Sun because of their relationship to the Ecliptic. In other words, the Nodes are the points where an aspect of the Lunar and Solar principals connect.

Let's look at the Moon first, and get a feel for what the Moon brings to this process. The Moon reflects the light of the Sun; it is passive, receptive, and feminine. The Moon responds, and produces emotions and feelings. The Moon is the container of our experience, providing form and location for the Sun's expression. The Moon relates to our conditioning, habits, vices, learned responses, in other words, the Moon is our memory. The Moon is not just our memory of this lifetime, the Moon is our soul's memory, and the Moon is what our soul wants us to remember from other lifetimes. The Moon is our

unconscious and our sub-conscious.

The Sun, on the other hand, is our conscious, active, life force. The Sun is our will, our power, our sense of purpose. The Sun is the heart of our existence, is the motivation for our life this time around. The Sun is how we are seen, how we shine, how we express and project ourselves. The Sun is how we want to be a hero in our lives; it is how we want to become an individual.

The Ecliptic, the apparent orbit of the Sun around the Earth, describes the path that our journey will follow in this lifetime. When we look at a natal chart, what we're actually looking at is a 2-dimensional representation of the positions of the planets as viewed from the Earth, flattened to the plane of the Ecliptic. In other words, in a chart, the Ecliptic is the chart wheel itself. When we look at the positions of the planets along the Ecliptic, we are looking at where along our journey we encounter these energies. The position of the Sun at birth shows the point where we chose to begin our quest for self-expression and self-realization in this lifetime. The Ecliptic, the chart wheel, represents the actual course that we will follow.

Viewed in this way, the Nodes represent the places in the chart where our past, where our soul memories (the Moon) intersect with our current conscious experiences, and our current cycle of lessons and growth. The South Node is the point where we are able to dip below the Ecliptic into our past and access our memories from previous journeys. The North Node is the point where our past lessons intersect with our present journey, the point where we emerge from the past and move into new territory. It is the point where our past lessons come up into the light of conscious awareness and let us look at this piece of our past in an entirely new way.

Now the connection of the South Node to our past, our karma, and of the North Node to our future, or dharma, begins to make sense.

## **The Nodes Are Always In Perfect Opposition**

Next, let's look at the Opposition aspect. Planets are said to be in Opposition when they occupy points across the wheel from each other, at an angle of 180°. Traditionally, Oppositions were considered "hard" or "challenging" aspects, and fortunately, this opinion has been largely updated.

When I look at Oppositions, the keywords I start with are "balance" and "perspective". (Others also use "compromise" but I find that limiting. To me, "compromise" means that each person has to give up something that they want to get something that they want. "Balance" just means that there is agreement and harmony.) The thing about Oppositions is that both planets really "want" the same thing, they just approach it from different ends of the spectrum. If we can get the two planets to see things from the other's point of view, then we can find that middle ground where they can work together and both get what they want. This process is made easier by the fact that being directly across from each other, the two planets can "see" each other easily, and are able to gain greater perspective on the big picture.

## **Putting It Together**

In other words, the key to the Nodal Axis is to get the South Node and the North Node to work with each other, right? Not quite. The Nodes are not planets, they are mathematical points in the chart. This doesn't make them any less important than a physical body, it just makes them a bit different to work with. The planets represent physical urges (for want of a better word) and drives that we all have. We can either choose to work with our Mars, for example, or to ignore it. Either way, we're going to be very aware of its presence in our charts. When Mars is activated by transit, or when transiting Mars triggers activity in our charts, we feel it. If we choose to become aware of it, and own it, we can learn to use the energy in the most constructive way possible. If we don't, we're still going to experience it.

The Nodes, on the other hand, have to do with the spiritual or soul lessons that we can encounter in this lifetime. The Nodes are where the path of our Soul development intersects with the path of our physical experiences. Since we're presently incarnated on the physical plane, that's where our focus naturally lies. If we don't choose to work with the Nodes and their lessons on a conscious level, we are probably not going to be very aware of how they manifest.

In order to really work with and experience the Nodes, we have to become consciously aware of our Spirituality, of our soul connection and our connection to the universe. We have to accept that we came here with a lesson that we chose to work on in this life, and we have to be ready to ask what that lesson might be. Are we learning it now? Of course. But the soul path lesson is far more subtle than a Mars transit.

The Nodal axis is not our spiritual path in this lifetime. What it is, or rather, what it can be, is a spiritual compass, pointing us in the right direction. The Nodes show us where our spiritual path and our soul lessons intersect with our physical path, and they are the points where we can most easily align with our spiritual path.

So with the Nodes, it's not just about perspective and balance, it's about leaning how to consciously work with and integrate the lessons, gifts and experiences indicated by the North and South Nodes. The Nodes can tell us what we have to work with, and show us what direction to go in to experience our lessons and to look for our true path in this life.

## The South Node

The South Node, then, sheds light on our past. By its location in the chart, the South Node represents the types of experiences and memories that our soul wants us to have in this life to help us on our developmental path. If our soul has gone to all of the trouble of bringing up these experiences, shouldn't we pay attention? And would a soul filled with love and light intentionally send us back into the material realm with only excess baggage? Of course not.

The South Node represents gifts to us from past lives. The lessons, the skills, the talents and abilities that we struggled so many years to master are still available to us through the South Node. The South Node is our soul's report card. It tells us what subjects we have passed: the South Node says, "Congratulations, you have passed Gemini Level I." For "incompletes" and less impressive marks, look to Saturn for further instruction and re-testing, not to the South Node.

Now, just because we can now look at the South Node in a more positive light doesn't mean that the traditional warnings about the South Node being a "trap" don't have merit. Every planet and point in the chart has a highest potential and a potential trap. With the South Node, the trap is to mistake summer vacation for graduation. We may be able to take a break, but we're still in school. So long as we are incarnated on the Earth, we are here to learn.

Even though the South Node represents lessons and skills that we have learned, used, and often mastered in the past, it also is an indication that we still have more to learn about them in this life. We may have learned the skills *too* well and limited our growth in other areas. We may have misused the information in the past, learning the letter of the lesson but not the spirit. Or it may merely be time to learn how to use the skills in a different way, to expand our mastery. In any event, for higher education, we look to the North Node.

## The North Node

The South Node is not alone in being long overdue for a revised interpretation. True, the trap of the South Node is a tendency to stick with what is familiar, which can mean that we miss the opportunity for growth and repeat old patterns. Also true, the way to avoid the trap of the South Node is to work with the North Node, which is why the North Node got such a great reputation. But the North Node also has a trap: the tendency to want to turn our back on the past in the single-minded pursuit of growth and new experiences.

The temptation of the North Node is to forget where we've been, and to focus only on where we are headed. The North Node, after all, brings success, happiness, abundance, luck, and freedom from the patterns and habits of the past. The North Node is the spiritual equivalent of the trip to the Bahamas that we've always wanted to take. And just like that trip to the Bahamas, the trap of the North Node makes us feel that much as we want it, we probably can't afford it. The North Node can seem to say, "you can get to the Bahamas, but you have to leave your nice, comfortable boat and

swim there on your own. Oh, and by the way, there are probably sharks in the water." The trap of the

North Node is just as dangerous as the South Node's trap. We buy into the idea that we have to sever our ties to the past and create a new future, dive into the water to swim out to the Bahamas, get part of the way there, and either get too tired, or too scared of the sharks in the waters, and hurry back to the comfort and familiarity of our boat, the S.S. South Node. And if we've really bought into the trap, we may feel like spiritual failures on top of it all.

Obviously, this is not an interpretation that is very supportive. My intention is not to bash the North Node, only to point out that the traditional interpretation of the Nodes encourages us to stay away from the South Node to reap the rewards of the North Node, and that is just *not* what it is all about. The true process of the North Node is not about turning our back on the past. The North Node is about taking stock of the past, honoring it, working with it, building on it, and learning how to use it in a new way.

For example, the North Node Sagittarius/South Node Gemini axis doesn't tell us that we're done with Gemini and now have to learn Sagittarius. Instead, it tells us that we are now going to learn how to use our Gemini experiences in a Sagittarian way. It tells us that part of our path, part of our lesson in this lifetime is to recognize that there *is* a point of balance between Gemini and Sagittarius, and finding it will be a key to our spiritual growth and development. By working with both the North Node *and* the South Node, we get to take the boat with us to the Bahamas instead of having to swim there.

## Interpreting the Nodes

Before we can begin to integrate and interpret the Nodal Axis, there is one more factor to consider: the Houses. And the single most important thing to remember about the Houses is that *the Houses are NOT the same things as the Signs*. Every book on the Moon's Nodes that I have come across makes the same assumptions and claims that the North Node in Aries is the same thing as the North Node in the 1st House and this is simply not the case.

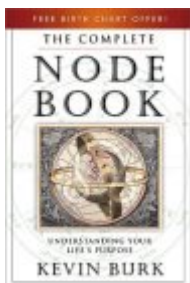
The Signs represent the underlying motivations and the evolutionary lessons that we must learn. The Houses represent the areas of life and of experience where we are most likely to encounter these lessons. The Signs, then are the "What" and the Houses are the "Where". The house placement of the Nodes does not in any way change the fundamental lessons and gifts of the Nodal Axis, it simply shows where in our lives we need look to find the lessons and gifts.

The Houses, too have their lessons, and like the lessons of the Sign Axis, the House Axis teaches the importance of balance and perspective. The opposing houses, like the opposing Signs represent areas of life that we must learn to integrate and harmonize. Just as we may tend to get a little too comfortable with the gifts of the South Node, we may also tend to focus more on the area of our life represented by the House of the South Node. And, of course, we may also occasionally focus too much on the North Node or spend too much time involved in the affairs of the North Node's House, and forget to draw on the support and resources of our South Node. Because the Houses represent the places that we will naturally encounter the Nodes, if we want to work with our Nodes, we can simply devote time to activities that relate to the House in question, and we will naturally encounter our Nodes.

When interpreting the Nodal Axis then, the first and most important factor is the Sign axis of the Nodes. What do the two Signs have in common? All opposing Signs share some common theme; they simply approach it from very different perspectives. Next, look at the Sign placement of the South Node and the North Node within this axis. What are the gifts that the South Node offers? What are the best and most wonderful expressions of the Sign of the South Node? And how can working with the North Node balance and enhance these gifts? By exploring these questions, we can discover some of the lessons of the specific Nodal Axis. Now, take this understanding and look at the House placement of the Nodes to learn more about where in our lives we will be able to experience and encounter these lessons.

Finally, let's try and put things into perspective. Remember that the Nodes are not physical bodies, and because they are not physical bodies, they operate on a far more subtle level than the planets do. Unlike the planets, the Nodes do not play a very big part in the development of an individual's personality. The Nodes, however, are the key to understanding more about what our spiritual purpose is in this lifetime. Sometimes the Nodes are closely connected with the planets in a chart and the connection between an individual's physical life and their spiritual path is obvious. Sometimes the

Nodes seem to exist on their own, separate from the rest of the action in the chart. Whatever way the Nodes appear to be linked with the other elements in the chart, the Nodes can help us to step back and see beyond the limitations of our time on Earth, and once again glimpse the bigger picture of the evolutionary journey of our soul.



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### **About Kevin B. Burk**

**[or, who is this "Kevin" person, anyway?]**

Kevin B. Burk has had a life-long interest in astrology and began self-study in 1992. Kevin has been studying Astrology formally since 1995, and currently holds a **Level IV NCGR Certification in Astrological Counselling**.

Kevin's approach to Astrology is a Spiritual one, and he both uses and advocates Astrology as a tool to gain greater understanding of ourselves and our Spiritual Path. Kevin is the author of **Astrology: Understanding the Birth Chart** and **The Complete Node Book**, both published by Llewellyn, and **Astrology Math Made Easy**, published by Serendipity Press.

In 2005, Serendipity Press will release two more astrology books by Kevin B. Burk: **Ask Kevin** (a collection of "Ask Kevin" articles from this site), and the **Astrological Relationship Handbook**.

Kevin specializes in human relationships, and is the author of **The Relationship Handbook: How to Understand and Improve Every Relationship in Your Life** (Serendipity Press, 2004). He travels across the United States conducting **relationship workshops**.

Kevin is a member of the San Diego Chapter of the National Council for Geocosmic Research (NCGR).

Kevin was born on **October 24, 1967** in New Orleans, LA. He has a Scorpio Sun, Cancer Moon, and Gemini Ascendant.