

# The Effect of Lunar Nodes on Human Biography: Our Hidden Plan

by

Susanne Donato

**Waldorf Journal Project #2**

Translated from the German

by

Nina Kuettel

In a lecture in Dornach, Switzerland, on April 16, 1920, Rudolf Steiner explained how the macrocosmic breathing process in the heavens is connected to the microcosmic breathing process in the human world and comes to expression through a rhythmic time cycle of 18.6 years. In human biography, we find this rhythmic cycle in the *lunar nodes rhythm* or *moon nodes*. According to Steiner, important things are happening with the human soul at these points in time.

The nights that a person lives through at these points in time are the most important nights of a person's life. There it is, where the macro cosmos completes its 18 breaths, completes one minute. And it is there where the human being, in a way, opens a window to a wholly different world.

What are these lunar nodes whose influence upon human lives is noticed again and again over a vast cycle of time?

## The Astronomic Lunar Nodes

First, let us ask the astronomers and allow them to explain to us the movement of the heavenly bodies. We will assume the vantage point of earth. Seen geocentrically, the sun orbits the earth. We call the orbital path that it delineates thereby the ecliptic. The moon also orbits the earth. Vis-à-vis the sun's path, the ecliptic, the moon's orbital path is inclined about  $5^\circ$ .

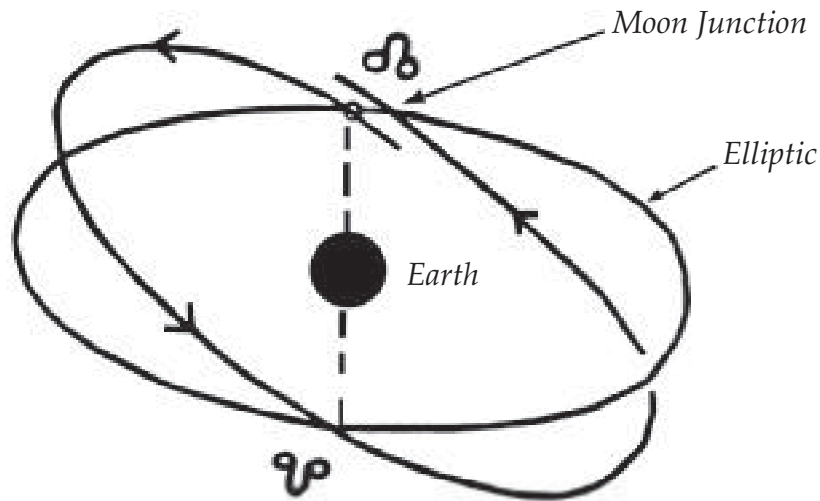


Figure 1: The arrows show the direction of the moon's orbit. The earth is to be thought of as in the center of the orbital paths.

The points at which the orbital paths of the sun and the moon intersect are called lunar nodes. Because the moon completes an orbit around the earth in one month, in this period it intersects the sun's orbital path twice, one time in a northerly direction called the north or ascending lunar node, and a half-month later in a southerly direction called the south or descending node. Within these monthly repetitions, the intersection point moves retrogressively through the ecliptic. After 18.6 years this intersection point has traversed the entire ecliptic ( $360^\circ$ ) and stands in practically the same place as it was 18.6 years earlier. In reference to human biography, it means that after 18 years, 7 months and 9 days, the ascending lunar node is again standing at the same place as it was at the time of a person's birth.

Everyone can paint for themselves the picture of the dramatic consequences of our insisting on staying in the womb.

So we decide to give up the protection and safety of the mother's organism. During the difficult and painful physical birthing process, we pass through a door to the other side and our independent life begins. At first we take elementary steps: the first breath, intake of nutrition, and digestion. Also for the first time, the organism must adjust to changing temperatures. Suddenly, we are exposed to previously unknown and, at first, apparently threatening experiences.

The signature that we recognize in the lunar nodes at birth we will find again in all the later lunar nodes during our lifetime. For one, it is the decision to say goodbye to conditions that no longer offer us possibilities for our inner and outer maturing process. Often, this decision will first channel itself in unconscious levels of our being and will at first only express itself in that we feel uncomfortable, lonely, misunderstood, and constricted by conventions and rules. We feel insignificant and unimportant. We get into controversies with parents, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. A yearning grows within us to do everything differently and begin something totally new. Then, more or less consciously, old securities are given up in order to accommodate our inner growth.

Just like physical birth, these birthing processes also do not happen without labor, pain, and discomfiture. Injuries during these births cannot be ruled out. The birthing process can go quickly or slowly. It can be light or accompanied by dramatic events. Dr. Frank Nager, a cardiologist in Zürich, says in his book, *Goethe der heilkundige Dichter (The Dramatic Birth of Goethe)*, "Who came into this world half-choked, dark-cyanotic, and appearing to be dead. After this very first, early brush with death, the first and fourth lunar nodes also brought the poet to the brink of death."

## **The First Lunar Node**

We reach the first lunar node at 18 years, 7 months and 9 days after birth. This has to do with breaking away from one's family. It is necessary to unwind oneself from the stream of inheritance, from parental authority. It is the beginning of a new independence.

Now it is also time to remove ourselves from people with whom we no longer share a common future in the sense of our birth impulse, people who can no longer contribute anything to our further development and vice-versa. School and other friendships of our youth come to an end. The connection to parents loosens and must transform from a parent-child relationship to a more equal, hopefully friend-based relationship. We are moved by such questions as: What is the meaning of my life? Under what life impulses did I come onto the scene? Where on earth do I find the place where I can realize those impulses?

We question ourselves about the right education, the right career. Even when we have already had to start a career for individual or family reasons, served an apprenticeship, say, or are already tied to a job, even then, we often ask ourselves: Am I on the right career path? Is this my calling?

If these questions are not asked or, in the case of a negative answer, no way to change is found, there can be grave consequences in the future. The yearning for self-realization arises. At the time of the first lunar node, we begin to form our own personality; we begin working on ourselves. Just as a crawling baby one day stands upright, and, following the example of adults, wants to stand on her own two legs, so we also, at the age of 18 or 19, want to inwardly stand upright, develop our own ideals and values, and act upon them.

In this context, it is interesting that of the physical healings reported in the Gospels, an age is given only three times and two of them shed light on lunar node events. In the *Gospel of Luke*, a story is told of a woman who

has suffered an illness for 18 years. “She was bent over and could not stand upright.” Through Jesus’ intervention, through word and deed, she could “on the spot stand upright again.”

This picture is amazingly exact. At this age, we still need outside help, a call from the outside, in order to seize uprightness. As a crawling baby, we had the example and encouragement of those people who stood upright before us. It was parents and siblings who helpfully held out their hands to the striving child. At 18 or 19, it is often the call of a spiritual force, of destiny, that points the way to uprightness.

Goethe’s biography shows how dramatic and forceful this directional calling can be. In June 1768, the 18-year-old law student at Leipzig suffered a life-threatening hemorrhage. The deeper meaning of this threat was explained by the poet himself. Through disharmony he had so stressed his organism “that the systems contained within it finally had to break out in a conspiracy and revolution in order to save the whole” (found in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*). An indication by Rudolf Steiner makes clearer what the aim was. “That which lived within Goethe as his individuality was much larger than that which his organism could really take in” (Lecture, November 11, 1906). Through the illness, Goethe experienced a loosening between his etheric body and his physical body whereby he gained the ability to permeate himself with extrasensory imaginations. It was an original kind of initiation, and it had the effect that his physicality was not broken down at an early under the immensity and force of the Goethe individuality.

A concise description of the characteristic and task of the first lunar node is:

From home into the world,  
Search for our own physical home.

By that, it is not only the geographic location that is meant, but also our field of activity and where we can make ourselves at home. In Goethe's case it was his earthly body itself with which he had to struggle to achieve as his home.

### **The Second Lunar Node**

At the time of the second lunar node at 37 years, 2 months and 20 days, the third birthing process takes place. Now it has to do with unwinding oneself from larger social connections that hinder or cripple the pre-birth impulse. The workplace, the circle of friends and colleagues, the larger circle of relatives and neighbors are all newly experienced and evaluated. The social environment as it has existed up until now is put to the test. Also what has existed within the soul is questioned and newly evaluated.

Now the questions arise: Have I found my place socially? Within which human connections do I feel comfortable? Do I feel understood? Which people in my environment can I also count on in crisis situations? Who values me in my particular character? Where am I welcome with my special abilities? Where can I bring those abilities and be active?

If the answers are not positive in the context of social associations, then new social connections are sought. At this age, Goethe found his ministry and social life in Weimar so constricting and suffocating that he fled to Italy. Enlivened and rejuvenated by the impressions and experiences of his Italian travels, he could write to Mrs. Von Stein on January 6, 1787: "Every day I peel off a new husk and hope to return as a human being." This soul-spiritual rebirth endowed him with a comprehensive outlook on nature. While in Italy, he formulated his ideas on metamorphosis of plants and animals and plant and animal archetypes. The special light and color experiences of this southern landscape led to his theory of color.

Oftentimes, there are surprising changes in careers at this time. The late 1970s dropout/alternative lifestyle movement was often attributed to the second lunar node. Successful industrial and bank managers, often 37 to 40, voluntarily end their careers and turned to alternatives. Their new jobs frequently have underlying social motives that afforded little outside recognition but are more satisfying to the inner person. They drop out to follow their hearts. During this time, destiny now also demands conscious renunciation and sacrifice. Events of destiny, which happen to us at this time, should be seen as strong appeals to our independence and initiative and demand the unfolding of our heart forces.

As a 19-year-old we have perhaps left school with a sense of relief and lightheartedly left our parent's home. It was, in a certain way, the natural flow of life. But the separations and tasks that now come toward us become tests of the heart and demand courage and self-confidence.

In the *Gospel of St. John*, we find the story of the lame man at Bethesda. He has been crippled for 38 years and has no one who will carry him to the water. Jesus asks him, "Will you get well?" And the invitation he extends to the sick man is irritating: "So, take up your bed and walk." That is exactly what the cripple cannot do. But the cripple has understood what Christ meant. It is the power of inner adaptability, his soul-force, that overcomes outside adversity as it is presented to us here with the picture of a lame body. We can no longer allow ourselves to be carried by our fellow human beings. We must ourselves become those who carry others. We can understand the second lunar node as the following:

Search for our own place of soul;  
our soul home.

By developing our soul-forces, our heart-forces, we can also make ourselves spiritually at home in our own social environment.

### **The Third Lunar Node**

The third lunar node, occurring at 55 years, 10 months and 28 days, almost 56, brings further social leave-takings and new orientations. Retirement approaches: In Japan and France the retirement age for many jobs is now 55. Career crises seem to accumulate. In Germany workers in this age group are urged to take retirement. But even where that is not the case, where no outside stress of this sort is present, we often come to an inner distress. Work that we have carried out with devotion and engagement for many years suddenly seems stale and empty. The activity does not satisfy us anymore. We can no longer be enthusiastic about our jobs or work.

In some longtime marriages and partnerships, emptiness, boredom, and indifference have encroached. All at once, these things, long covered-over by daily activities and routines, suddenly come to the fore of our consciousness and can lead to crisis in the marriage and possibly divorce. Or, anxiety awakens as we feel our waning physical strength that prevents us from fulfilling duties.

We take stock of ourselves: Was that all? What of my life's desires and goals have I realized? What tasks and possibilities do I still have left? The wish and desire to leave something lasting and significant to the world live in us. Since our physical energy becomes less, we must, more than ever, examine what is important to us, what is essential, and ask: What do I still want to do? What do I still want to attain in my life?

At the second lunar node the question was: In what human social connections do I feel comfortable? Now a spiritual element arises: Do we still have common interests and goals? Do we still have anything to say to one another? Or are we just staying together out of habit? Friendships and social relationships are examined and weighed according to their spiritual connectivity and lasting value. Encountering serious illness and death also becomes more frequent. How many people at this time become ill with



cancer, have a heart attack, or suffer the threatening climax of a chronic illness? The thought of dying and death comes more strongly into consciousness and serves to sharpen our gaze into the spiritual world.

We become contemplative. What comes after death? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What deeper meaning does life have?

Spiritual and religious questions become important. If we have, up to now, felt only nominally connected to a religious community, we now sense the need to deepen our religious experience. We truly want to know. We want to experience the reality and truth of the spiritual world. The title over this period of our lives could read:

How do we see ourselves being seen in the world?

We experience ourselves as spiritual-creative beings and want to know: Where is my distinctive place in a spiritually everlasting house?

### **It Is the Spiritual Home that is Sought**

Goethe reached his third lunar node in 1805. He became ill in the first months of this year and was plagued by kidney colic. His friend Schiller also became ill during these months. On May 1st, Goethe visited him for the last time, and on May 9th Schiller died. Three weeks later Goethe wrote to Zelter about the loss of his good friend: "I thought I would lose myself, but instead I have lost a friend and at the same time half of my being." But Goethe did not remain in this resigned state. Some time later, while looking at Schiller's skull, he said:

What more can a person have from life  
Than God-Nature revealing itself  
How it allows the solid to trickle away to spirit  
How it solidly preserves that created by spirit.

## **The Fourth and Fifth Lunar Nodes**

The fourth lunar node occurs at 74 years and 5 months. The fifth lunar node is at 92 years, 1 month and 9 days and nowadays is more and more often experienced.

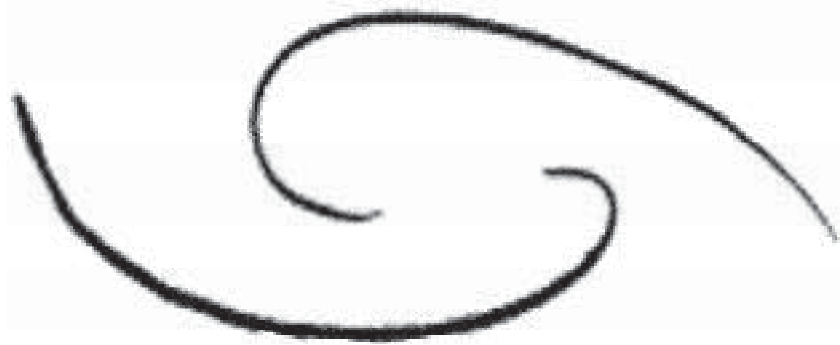
Up to this time, whoever has attained to a certain wisdom and has resolved the tasks of the previous lunar nodes, in accordance with his or her individual possibilities, for that person the heavenly realm becomes permeable and he or she can let some of their wisdom radiate into his/her surroundings. The lunar node energy that now streams toward us is no longer important for one's own becoming. It is a gift that, with our aid, can be further bestowed upon all of humankind. In the domain of the fourth lunar node, we can create warmth of soul and a soul-home for those people surrounding us. If we have gained enough spiritual strength and qualities, then in the domain of the fifth lunar node, our physical body itself can become a place of the spirit.

The signature of the fourth lunar node is singular in Goethe's destiny. His heart-forces underwent a two-fold test, physical and spiritual. In February/March of 1823, Goethe had a heart attack, which again led him to the gates of death. He had just recovered when the 74-year-old became inflamed with passion for the 18-year-old Ulrike von Levetzow. But his offer of marriage, presented through the Grand Duke Carl-August von Weimar, was delicately and discretely refused. The poet must abjure personal happiness. In three poems that Goethe later combined under the title "Trilogie der Leidenschaft" (Trilogy of Passion), we can see how Goethe mended his broken heart by gaining deeper insight into his experiences.

## **Past – Present – Future**

The lunar nodes occur at exact intervals, to the day. However, the node-related events can happen over weeks and months, as everyone knows

from experience. When we look closely at these occurrences, we discover in them a clearly integrated dynamic of time, best represented by a swirl.



*Figure 2*

The past becomes effective, something comes to an end, a kind of vacuum comes about. Within this vacuum, the future shines forth. But this future is still unformed and it takes our own, courageous decisions to grasp it and make it our own.

We can understand the astrological or astronomical exact lunar nodes as the turning points where our past that has been worked through can become our future—or where everything can come to a standstill. Only when the turnabout succeeds can we proceed in harmony with our birth impulses.

### **The Descending Lunar Nodes**

Previously we have spoken only of the ascending lunar nodes. There are also effects of the descending lunar nodes. They occur halfway between two ascending nodes, i.e., in the 9th year, 27th year, and so forth.

The signature of the half-node is a initial, tender suggestion to find what the compelling task of the next ascending node will be. On the other hand, at this time another chance presents itself to resolve whatever was not accomplished during the previous node. Events having to do with the

descending lunar nodes are seldom outwardly apparent. They are times of quiet separations and changes and take place in the deeper layers of our being.

### **Our Hidden Plan**

If one asks individuals about their life goals, most of the answers name external goals: I want to be a carpenter, a college professor, computer expert, an artist, a successful manager, an entrepreneur, build a house, be a loving husband or wife and have children, have a lot of friends, have a convivial home, earn a lot of money, and so forth.

Whoever has attained certain goals has also experienced that happiness and satisfaction are usually of short duration. What penetrates the consciousness, at the latest by the third lunar node, is what we carry with us as a hidden plan from the moment of our birth. It is the desire to create something that will outlast us and, in the best sense of the word, to achieve self-realization.

We are not the professor, the opera singer, the homeowner, the happy family member. Those are only props on the stage of our life. We are a distinctive "I," and we want to be recognized and acknowledged as such. We want to carry something into the world that only we can bring.

### **The Lunar Nodes: Processes of Purification and Change**

In our times, the danger is that we totally go submit to superficialities and thereby lose ourselves. The lunar nodes repeatedly bring us anew our pre-birth resolutions, our hidden plans, and punctuate them into our memories again so that we can come through all the aberrations and find our way back to our paths of destiny and our original tasks.

The questions "Who am I?" and "What do I want?" come into our consciousness in ever-new forms at these times. And the lunar node events start processes of purification and change at ever-new levels:

- The first lunar node in the realm of the personal,
  - The second lunar node in the realm of family, friends, and career,
- and
- The third lunar node in the realm of the supra-personal human.

Social connections and relationships, which serve only to tie us to the past though they are dear to us but out of which nothing new can come, must be left behind. With such connections, development comes to a standstill. It does not go any further. A vacuum comes about. We are called upon from the outside to make destiny-changing decisions. Lunar node forces stream into these breathing spaces of fate, call forth renewing energy from our inner self, awaken the will to sculpt something new of our own.

At first, this something new announces itself through inner alienation, upheavals, and partings. We feel misunderstood, have self-doubt, experience our own inanity, feel insensible, helpless, deeply lonely, and abandoned.

But then thoughts are born out of this inner distress and courageous decisions are made that ignite us with new life and new energy. We enter into a pioneer-mode and an atmosphere of departure that, at the same time, awakens our willingness and courage to sacrifice and our ability to assert ourselves.

Whether the lunar node process brings about dramatic change or occurs practically unnoticed varies from person to person and can be different from node to node. For a person who lives strongly in the past and holds tight to what is known, rejecting the new, it can become a long, painful struggle wherein perhaps only a grave stroke of fate, a threat to existence, or a confrontation with illness and death is what leads the person to change. If a person can lead a life that is in harmony with her or his birth-impulses, the lunar nodes can pass almost unnoticed. But they will always experience once again a reinvigoration and intensification of those impulses.

Lunar node events and experiences are as varied and individual as people themselves. But what they all have in common is that at this time a window to the spiritual world is opened through which we can look at our hidden plan. Then, strengthened by spiritual energy, we can make progress in our striving to unfold our deepest life impulses.

