

The Lunar Phases in Traditional Astrology. A Study

Ancient authors are concerned with the matter of the signification of the different lunar phases.

Some of the places where the reader can find references about this matter are: Vettius Valens "Anthology", Paulus Alexandrinus' "Introduction", Hephaestio of Thebes "Apotelesmatics", the "Liber Hermetis", and Bonatti's "Book of Astronomy"

The ancients called the lunar phases the defluxions of the Moon and basically there were two approaches to discussing this. I'll stress in this summary Valens's approach, but we can find in Liber Hermetis another one in which the quality of the Moon is given according if she is joining or separating from a planet.

Anyway, according with Vettius Valens the following phases are recognised:

1. Conjunction
2. The "rising of the Moon" or simply "light". This is when the Moon first emerges from the rays of the Sun (ca. 15° or 1 day, from the Sun) and you see that slender sickle in the west just after Sunset. This was the Moons' "first light".
3. Then came the first Crescent
4. Then the first Quarter or "First Half"
- 5 Then the First Double-convex
6. The Full Moon
7. The "waning of the light" was the opposite of "light" when the Moon moved ca. $12-15^\circ$ past the opposition.
8. The 2nd double-convex
9. The last Quarter or "Second half"
10. The 2nd Crescent
11. The "setting" is that final slender sickle of a Moon you see in the early morning in the east just before daylight, before she disappears completely under the rays of the Sun.

The "rising" of the Moon (or any planet for that matter) and the "setting" of the Moon was not talking about the Moon's relation to the horizon, but it was talking about the Moon's (or a planets) exiting or entering the Sun's rays, this is important to notice: it's the first and last "light" before and after combustion.

This is taken from Chapter 36 in the 2nd Book of Valens "Anthology":

"The 11 figures of the Moon in relation to the Power of their Effects: The figures of the Moon are 7 by a natural reckoning, but we have found 11 just as in others. First is the Conjunction; Second, Rising; then when it is 45° away from the Sun it makes a phase which is Crescent; then until 90° , Half; then until 135° , Double-convex; then until 180° , Whole Moon; then when it is 45° away from Whole Moon (which is 225°) it makes its second Double-Convex phase; then until 270° , the second Half; then until 315° , the second Crescent; then until 360° the Setting phase. There is also another figure of it when it first

begins to wane.”

“What each phase signifies and what kinds of Effects it has – We will append how the figures in question are also taken in relation to their effect-description and how they are fitting for a certain god.”¹

“The Conjunction, then, gives indications for reputation and power and kingly and sovereign dispositions, and for all of the public activities connected with cities, and for parents and marriages and mysteries, and for all general and cosmic matters. Similarly also, the lord of the Conjunction both of latitude and of the course. “

Here Valens is saying that not only the Conjunction indicates these things, but also the lord of the Conjunction. He is speaking of the planet ruling the sign where the conjunction occurs, its disposition in the chart and its essential dignity and accidental signification²

“The Rising of the Moon (which is called ‘Light’) and the lord of this gives indications for the determination concerning length of life and what one does and concerning the support for what is about to be, and confirms the actions of the Conjunction. And just as the monthly and cosmic movements are considered from the first visibility, so the lord of the Light shows the general effects. Hermes also joins in assisting until the 4th day of the Moon.”³

And he says that Mercury will assist in this phase for 4 days.

“The Crescent formation (45°) signifies the upset and the expectations in life, and what concerns women and mother. And Hermes assists until the 8th (day).”³

“The Half formation (90°) gives indications concerning injuries and ailments and whatever happens violently; and furthermore, concerning children and worth and future goods. And Aphrodite is configured until the 12th comes about.”

“The Double-Convex phase (135°) gives indications concerning happiness and future advancement and being away from home and the sympathy of king. And the Sun is also similar until the 14th comes about.”

“The Whole Moon (180°) concerns good and ill repute [reputation] and being away from home, also concerning things that happen violently, and things that issue forth from excess and things that wax from the least, and concerning sympathies and ailments and political oppositions and sympathies of parents. And it also has the colour (I understand by colour a general tone) of the setting zoidion.”⁴

The first lord of the waning light, 12-15° past the opposition, gives indications concerning the diminishment of belongings and difficulties and things that go toward depression, and concerning sudden falls. And Ares is equipotent to the post-descension and is lord until the

21st day of the Moon.”⁵

“The second Double-Convex(225°) gives signs for being abroad and greater actions and for happiness. And Zeus is equipotent to the god and lord until the 25th day of the Moon.”⁶

“The second Half (270°) gives signs for old matters and ailments of long duration and for children. Then Kronos is equipotent until the 30th comes about.”⁷

“The lord of the Crescent , until 315°, gives signs concerning the death of the wife and inactivity and plundering.”

“Finally, until 360°, the setting gives signs for bonds and constrictions and hidden matters, for accusations and disenfranchisements.”

“And the order of the figures of the Moon is thus, but the co-mixtures with the 5 gods and the Sun are (in agreement) with the pivot points.”⁸

Summarizing these studies we can say that:

The Conjunction or New Moon, from 0 - 12 degrees, has as ruler the lord of the sign the conjunction occurs in.

The ‘Rising Light’, 12 or 15° until 45, has the lord of its sign (or perhaps even the bound lord) AND Mercury.

The First Crescent, 45° until 90, has the lord of its sign AND Mercury.

The First Half or First Quarter, 90° - until 135, has the lord of its sign AND Venus.

The First Double-Convex, 135° - until 180, has its lord AND the Sun.

The Whole Moon, 180° until about 192, has the lord of the sign it falls in.

The “Waning Light”, 192 or 195° until 225, has the lord of its sign (or perhaps terms) as ruler AND Mars.

The 2nd Double-Convex, 225° until 270, has the lord of its sign AND Jupiter.

The 2nd Half or Last Quarter, 270° until 315, has as ruler the lord of its sign AND Saturn.

The 2nd Crescent, 315° until about 345 - 347, has as ruler, the lord of its sign AND Saturn.

The “Setting Light”, ca. 345 to 347° until 360, has as ruler the lord of the sign it falls in.

It is interesting to point out that the assisting planets, in Chaldean order, corresponds to each phase and that Mercury means the beginning and Saturn the end.

¹ By “god” he is referring to one of the planets

² In his discussion in Book III on longevity and about the ‘ruler’ of the predominator, that is to say the Alchocoden of the Hyleg, he says the ‘ruler’ is the lord of the bounds. Since a particular indication of this phase concerns length of life and support of the previous Conjunction, it’s possible that in this case Valens is using the lord of the bound where the First Light occurs)

³ In this phase, he only specifies Mercury as assisting rather than the lord the Crescent is ruled by

⁴ (You have to pay attention here: the Whole Moon is ‘coloured’ by the sign on the cusp of the 7th house, the ‘setting zoidion’, what includes the ruler of that sign. In this case, though, it is not the 7th of the chart, but rather the 7th from the Conjunction. As a matter of fact we are seeing is almost a derived chart based on the conjunction)

⁵ (Here, he refers as with the ‘rising light’ to a specific lord . The Moon is 12 - 15° from the opposition. If the previous was the colored by the setting zoidion, here we can infer a color of the “post descension”, or 8th house. And a malefic is assisting it, Mars

⁶ (Here Valens makes it clear that not only is there a planet that assists, but that there is a ruler of the phase, which is most likely the ruler of the sign the phase falls in

⁷ Now, Saturn assists until the new moon or up until the moon “sets” under the beams of the Sun. This period also includes the last Crescent at 315°

⁸ Here my understanding is that the principal phases have to do with the meaning of the first, 4th, 7th and 10th houses. Anyway we can’t understand why the the second Half (270°) that would have to do with the 10th house gives signs for old matters and ailments of long duration and for children being ruled by Kronos.