

The Eclipses of August 2017

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Solar and Lunar eclipses are arguably the most spectacular events that regularly recur in the heavens. For as long as humankind has existed, we've been amazed (and often terrified) whenever the Sun or Moon are temporarily "blotted out."

Twice each month, the Sun, Earth, and our Moon line up longitudinally. When the Moon is between the Sun and Earth, that's a New Moon. When the Earth is between the Sun and Moon, that's a Full Moon. Twice a year (on average), those alignments are not only longitudinal, but identical in latitude as well. Literally, the three bodies form a straight line, which astronomy calls a *syzygy*. When that occurs, an eclipse happens. In a solar eclipse (which is always at the New Moon), the Moon's disc passes over the Sun, temporarily blocking the Sun's light from our perspective on Earth. In a lunar eclipse (which is always at the Full Moon), the earth's shadow temporarily covers the Moon, blacking out its reflected light.

Despite the differences in size between the three bodies, the distances between them are such that, for us here on Earth, the discs of the Sun and Moon appear to be the same size. That's part of why eclipses are so astonishing. Since the Moon is gradually moving further away from the earth, this won't always be the case, but it has been so throughout our brief history on the earth and will remain so for a long, long time to come.

Eclipses typically come twice a year, in pairs about two weeks apart: a solar eclipse followed by a lunar, or vice versa. Every so often, eclipses occur in a trio over about a month, with a solar eclipse between two lunar, or a lunar eclipse between two solar. The last trio took place in 2013; the next will be in 2018.

Needless to say, astrology presumes that eclipses are meaningful and significant events. How to interpret them, however, is a knotty problem. Over my four+ decades studying astrology and working full-time as an astrologer, I've read a great deal of the astrological literature about eclipses. Almost all of what I've read, however, has left me unsatisfied.

The basic astrological symbolism of eclipses tends to be more poetic than logical. Since eclipses occur in both longitudinal and latitudinal alignment, they are said to indicate times of "zero latitude" — in other words and by analogy, no wiggle room, no option for choice. Even more than outer planet transits, eclipses are

extreme “wild cards” or jokers in the heavenly deck. They are presumed to indicate an intensification of experience, along with the possibility that life might change dramatically (and suddenly), but they can also come and go without a peep, without any apparent change in life. The word “fate” gets tossed around with eclipses, since we don’t know what other concept to use.

Astrologers have attempted to work around the unpredictability of eclipses by using a number of different technical means to interpret and integrate them into forecasting. We can certainly check to see how a particular eclipse fits into the charts of various individuals — personal clients, social leaders, whomever. That gives us a fairly good sense of how important the eclipse might be to that person, and what in their lives might be triggered.

Another technique is to examine the chart of the eclipse itself (erected for the moment of the eclipse from a place of cultural or political importance, such as Washington, D.C.), and interpret the portents that way. How potent is the chart as a whole? Detailed rules exist in astrology for making that assessment. Which other archetypes (planets) are emphasized in the eclipse chart, and is their emphasis stressful and conflicted or smooth and well-supported?

Some astrologers look to more esoteric indications, such as alignments of the eclipse with fixed stars or minor asteroids.

If just knowing the exact date/time of an eclipse, its relative strength (astronomically and astrologically), and its position in the zodiac aren’t enough to get a firm handle on what correspondences might occur (and they’re often not), then perhaps the zodiacal position of an eclipse as a relevant “trigger point” might reveal more. This means that when another heavenly body — a planet, for instance — passes over the exact position of an eclipse during the months before or after the eclipse happens, that passage might presumably function as a trigger indicating stimulation of other ongoing cycles. While I respect that theory, in my study of eclipses during my early years of studying astrology, I did not find trigger points to be particularly useful.

I have no particular gripe with any of these techniques, except to say that using them never provided me with any greater confidence that what I found through them was relevant or useful. In researching eclipses past, I didn’t find enough correspondences with known real-life events that happened before or after to allow me to feel that I was getting a good window into reality’s inner workings.

Had any techniques for understanding eclipses worked for me reliably (or at least better than they did), I would quite probably have become an avid proponent of eclipses in my astrological work. But they didn’t, so I relegated them to the realm of esoteric astrology — which is not my chosen orientation — and removed them from the astrological techniques I use in my work with clients.

Now, I'm not suggesting that we should pay no attention to eclipses, nor that other astrologers should give up talking and writing about them in whatever ways they choose. Not by a long shot.

I understand very well that astrology covers and can be applied to a wide diversity of interests, from the profane to the sacred, and from the ordinary through the extraordinary. Each astrologer brings to the work his or her personal orientations, and that's as it should be.

All I'm saying is that I could never figure out what the hell to do with eclipses to make sense of them and help my clients, so I haven't built them into my professional approach to the astrological system. But then, I've never been devoted to textbook astrology. Just because a certain technique is part of the astrological tradition has never been for me a compelling reason to embrace it. If a certain technique makes sense to me and works to provide cogent and practical information, I use it. If another technique is foreign to my own orientations or otherwise doesn't fit for me, I don't use it.

For instance, in my approach to cycles, I rely exclusively on transits. I don't use secondary progressions or solar arcs at all. Why? Because those symbolic cycle systems never "clicked" for me, and I didn't feel that they provided me with useful information. Do I think that other astrologers should do as I do and not use progressions? No, absolutely not. Astrology contains a wealth of techniques far beyond what any astrologer could actually use day-to-day. We cherry pick the system, based on what works for us.

As I've written before, some astrologers may know relatively little about the wide technical breadth of the astrological system, but if they truly understand how to share what they do know, they can be brilliantly insightful and quite helpful to others. Other astrologers may have studied every technique in the entire pantheon of astrology, yet still be unable to translate any of that in verbal or written ways that are effective in illuminating what anything means.

So, what can I offer about the two eclipses upcoming in August? Well, to begin I'll list what types of eclipses they are, when they'll happen, and where in the zodiac they will occur:

Lunar Eclipse

Type: *Partial*

Date & Time: *August 7th, 2017, at 1:21 p.m. CDT*

Zodiacal position: *15° 51' of Aquarius*

Solar Eclipse

Type: *Total*

Date & Time: *August 21st, 2017, at 1:26 p.m. CDT*

Zodiacal Position: *28° 51' of Leo*

OK, that's easy enough. Anyone can find that information with a simple Google search. What do these two eclipses imply, however, in terms of possible correspondences in real life?

Ah, there's the rub. I don't know, at least not with any confidence, nor in a manner that makes me eager to publish a detailed pronouncement.

The most I can offer is that this pair of eclipses may imply an intensification of the current social conflict between traditional authority and revolutionary upheaval. Can we restore the status quo of the modern world and put Humpty Dumpty back together, or are we better off accepting that the egg of normalcy is not just cracked, but shattered, and begin cooking an omelet?

The eclipses of August 2017 indicate an acceleration of our collective path down that road toward a decision. This isn't arrival at a destination, but one further step on a journey to determine the future of civilization.

As a final offering, I'll list the Sabian Symbols for the precise degrees of each Eclipse. The Sabian Symbols are an exquisite and poetic sequence of 360 scenes, one for each degree of the circle. The scenes were created in 1925 by astrologer and occultist Marc Edmund Jones and a psychic named Elsie Wheeler. The interpretations below are mine, modified in context from my book, **The Oracle of Love**.

LUNAR ECLIPSE AT AQUARIUS 16

ECONOMIC DECISIONS

A business executive at his desk.

When the symbols were visualized in 1925, business was almost exclusively a man's world. Now, however, the scene could just as easily picture a woman as a man. If we remove gender, three elements remain: the field of *business*, the role of *executive*, and the setting of a *desk*. These elements imply that the symbol's interpretation involves productivity, responsibility, decision-making, and the effort of work.

In life, the bulk of our experience is not found in pleasant serendipity. Life requires effort and many serious decisions along the way. Much of life is about work rather than play.

We have an ongoing series of decisions to make about how we live. The outcome will depend on our ability to make those decisions with intelligence and responsibility.

A mermaid.

Consider the mermaid: half human, half fish, juxtaposing the civilized aspects of life with the more animal motivations. The human part involves logic and manners. The animal part involves emotion and instinct.

The mermaid stands, or rather floats, halfway between the evolutionary past and the present. But which way is she headed? Does the mermaid symbolize the tendency of all life to evolve toward greater consciousness and sophistication? Or does she represent an evolutionary throwback, the yearning we all share for the simpler reality of unconsciousness?

Our situation in civilization has brought us to a crossroads. We are currently half human and half animal in our approach to life, half civilized and half primitive, half conscious in grace and half driven by primal instinct. For the moment, we have been granted a stay, but we cannot remain in limbo. The decisions we make concerning how we live on this planet will have real consequences later.

Which way are we headed? Which direction will we go?