

astrological-cultural-spiritual-political
views & commentary...

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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness...

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Dear friends,

I hope that everyone made it through the two recent eclipses in May and the ongoing strangeness of life in these altogether bizarre times.

This month's newsletter focuses on one way to reduce the stress of the coming summer.

VOID-OF-COURSE MOONS

Among the more curious technical phenomena in astrology are what's called Void-of-Course Moons. For those not well-versed in astrological jargon, that's not "void... *of course*," but rather "void (*dash*) of (*dash*) course," meaning "having no path." These are more commonly referred to as Moon Voids.

The orbit of our Moon is like a mother's womb inside which all life on earth exists. The Moon provides a buffer for life on earth, much like the protective layer of the atmosphere, which physically shields us from potentially harmful cosmic radiation. Unlike the atmosphere, however, the Moon has a subtler metaphysical function—she "connects" those cosmic energies to our emotional matrix in a way that regulates us, establishing rhythms of relevance. (In occultism, this has more to do with the earth's needs than it does with ours.) Our sympathetic nervous systems are influenced by the daily ebb and flow of oceanic tides, and by the shifting meanings of monthly lunar phases.

The Moon takes about 28 days to go around our heavens, changing signs of the zodiac every two and one-third days. As she passes through a given sign, the Moon forms significant angular relationships with other bodies in the solar system. These are called "aspects," but we can think of them as "connections," similar to electrical connections between components on a circuit board.

The time period between the Moon's last connection with another major body and its entrance into the next sign of the zodiac is called **Void-of-Course**. The amount of time the Moon is Void can be as brief as

a few minutes or as long as a couple days. Because everything in the solar system moves through the heavens at different apparent rates of speed, these Void phases vary quite dramatically from one sign to the next, and also from month-to-month, season-to-season, and even year-to-year.

The ever-changing distribution of the major bodies through the signs results in some months having thirteen very brief Moon Voids. Every couple of days, there's a period of just minutes or maybe an hour or two where the Moon is Void. Other months can be pockmarked with long Moon Voids that stretch out, lasting an entire day or longer.

The Meaning of Moon Voids

OK, but so what? How is this relevant? Well, it's meaningful in that Moon Voids are times when NOTHING CONNECTS. The music of life plays on, but the rhythm is disrupted. We can't keep the beat, so dancing is nearly impossible. It's as if the subtle energies underlying the meanings behind events and experiences just shut down. The ether loses its elasticity. Synchronicity takes a holiday, and the normal patterns of apparent cause-and-effect come apart. These are just poetic metaphors, of course. I don't pretend to know the actual mechanism that Moon Voids symbolically indicate.

What I can suggest with somewhat greater confidence, however, is that whatever happens occurs at a level that is too subtle for most of us to sense or feel, but profound and deep enough to affect the webbing of relationships that make up our worlds. I don't mean just our social or intimate interactions, but the fundamental relationships of everything to everything else.

Moon Voids are interpreted in astrology as times of minimal results—less productivity, less movement, less overt meaning. This is the ebb in the short-term ebb-and-flow. Life seems normal enough on the surface, but it doesn't much go anywhere. Things don't play out the way they seem to be heading. So the message of a Moon Void is to slow down and smell the roses. Get off the treadmill. Take time out for a little cosmic siesta. Avoid the exigencies of real life—let business and relationships lie fallow. To whatever extent possible, don't initiate, don't make decisions, and don't invest expectations. Instead, wait, rest, and reflect. Nurture yourself. Daydream. Contemplate your navel. Exhale.

This advice may be reminiscent to some readers of that for Mercury retrograde periods. Some similarities do apply, such as cautions against major decisions, purchases, or contracts. But Moon Voids have a different feeling than Mercury retrogrades, which are good for rethinking plans and cleaning up unfinished business. Moon Voids are much more spiritual in their implications. They urge us to turn away from regular life in the real world, if only for a day or two at most, and to redirect our attention toward recovery for our bodies and peace for our souls.

Do I believe in Moon Voids? Good question. I'm not as certain of their effect as I am of many other astrological events, nor do I share the fervent certainty about their impact felt by some of my professional colleagues. Still, the technique has persisted from the astrology of centuries past up to the present, and many respected astrologers pay careful attention to Voids.

Why are You Telling Us this Now?

I'm writing about Moon Voids because we're entering a particularly volatile and challenging season. The entire summer of 2003 is chock full of astrological indications that we need to turn our attention inward, away from the efforts and conflicts of external expression. Mars will spend nearly the whole summer in retrograde effect as it approaches closer to the earth than it has in the last 60,000 years. Yes, that's right, closer than any time since long before the dawn of civilization. And, given the impending culmination of the extraordinary Sun-Mars-Uranus cycle I've written about so often over the past year, this is really stressful, folks—almost incredibly so. Many of us will feel so anxious and stressed out that we'll suffer a kind of creeping exhaustion from the emotional meltdown, like battle fatigue.

In the wonderful way life has of balancing by compensation—taking away from one place in our lives and giving to another—this summer also has some really long Moon Voids. For instance, an average

month of thirteen Moon Voids might total no more than about 70 hours, roughly three days total time out of 30 days in the month. By contrast, June of 2003 has 159 total hours of Moon Voids, July has 157 hours, and August has a whopping 196 hours of Voids. This is about a week out of each month. Wow. That's some major league Void time.

These extremely long Moon Voids give us the chance to back away from the excessive pressure of these difficult times. Those who remember to take the opportunity to slow down and turn inward every couple of days will benefit by refreshing themselves. Those who ignore the Voids and keep trying to push ahead will pay a severe toll in wasted effort, mistakes, breakdowns, disappointment, and emotional frustration.

The Problem with Moon Voids

If you get on the Internet and do a Google search for "Moon Voids," you'll come up with literally hundreds of astrological websites that give the dates and times of the Moon Voids for a given month. The problem with this, however, is that the information is always presented in lists of raw numerical data—the date, day, and time each Void begins, followed by the date, day, and time each Void ends. And with twelve Voids in every month, it's too much to sift through. Nobody likes trying to decipher long data lists of numbers. Making sense of it is too much work, and we end up either not trying or not remembering later. I mean, it's one thing to get a prescription for medicine that will make you feel better; it's another thing to have the discipline to remember to take it on schedule.

So I've done two things to make this easier for all of us. One is right here in the newsletter in the sections below, and the other is on my website.

First, I've gone through all the coming Moon Voids for the summer, and I've culled out the ones that are, for one reason or another, either of minor importance or less consequence—they're too brief to matter, or they happen in the middle of the night when most people are sleeping, or they occur over the weekend when lots of us aren't humping our butts doing business. See, the Voids we most need to pay attention to occur during daylight hours on weekdays, because that's when we're most likely to get fooled into thinking that life is normal, even though it's not. Those Void weekdays are when we really need to back off and consciously stop (or at least slow down) our attempts to be productive and get things done.

Listed below are all the long Moon Voids that occur during weekdays over the next three months. I understand that it may be too much trouble to copy all this into your schedules, but, at the very least, circle these dates in your Daytimers and ease up on those days.

June 2003

3rd (TUES) from 11:27 a.m. to 4th (WED) at 2:25 a.m. 15 hours
10th (TUES) from 12:00 p.m. to 4:39 p.m. 5 hours
14th (SAT) from 10:12 p.m. to 16th (MON) at 7:41 p.m. 45 hours
22nd (SUN) from 10:28 p.m. to 23rd (MON) at 10:15 p.m. 24 hours
25th (WED) from 8:41 a.m. to 26th (THUR) at 11:13 p.m. 39 hours
29th (SUN) from 1:39 p.m. to 1 July (TUES) at 8:13 a.m. 43 hours

July 2003

4th (FRI) from 11:15 p.m. to 5th (SAT) at 8:20 p.m. 21 hours
7th (MON) from 5:23 a.m. to 8th (TUES) at 11:43 a.m. 20 hours
9th (WED) from 12:58 p.m. to 10th (THUR) at 1:48 a.m. 13 hours
11th (FRI) from 10:53 a.m. to 12th (SAT) at 3:21 a.m. 16 hours
15th (TUES) from 5:57 p.m. to 16th (WED) at 10:14 a.m. 16 hours
18th (FRI) from 9:49 a.m. to 7:20 p.m. 10 hours
23rd (WED) from 4:14 a.m. to 6:42 p.m. 14 hours
25th (FRI) from 4:38 p.m. to 26th (SAT) at 6:23 a.m. 14 hours
30th (WED) from 10:46 a.m. to 9:27 p.m. 11 hours

August 2003

1st (FRI) from 4:01 a.m. to 2nd (SAT) at 1:48 a.m. 22 hours
8th (FRI) from 4:01 a.m. to 11:02 a.m. 19 hours
12th (TUES) from 1:35 p.m. to 7:19 p.m. 6 hours
14th (THUR) from 5:29 a.m. to 15th (FRI) at 3:00 a.m. 22 hours
24th (SUN) from 3:51 p.m. to 25th (MON) at 11:48 a.m. 20 hours
26th (TUES) from 7:00 a.m. to 27th (WED) at 5:27 a.m. 22 hours
30th (SAT) from 1:37 p.m. to 31st (SUN) at 11:00 a.m. 21 hours

Now for the Way Cool part.

Go to my website (www.billherbst.com) and click on “**Moon Void Calendars**” (in the upper right-hand corner, where the page links are). That will open a PDF file that has graphic calendars for June-December of 2003, with all the Moon Void periods shaded in. Print the page for the current month, and stick it on your refrigerator. Better yet, take it to your office. You don’t have to write down anything or sift through lists of numbers—it’s all there in a format you can see visually and use instantly. Every Moon Void for the next seven months.

Then all you have to do is look at your Moon Void Calendar and say, “*Oh, it’s time to take tomorrow off!*” You’ll know when to take it easy at work and lower your expectations. You’ll know when to refrain from major decisions and take things with a grain of salt. And you’ll know when Mother Nature is telling you to relax and just float down the cosmic river.

I’ve done the work of making the calendars. Paying attention and then relaxing is up to you.



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