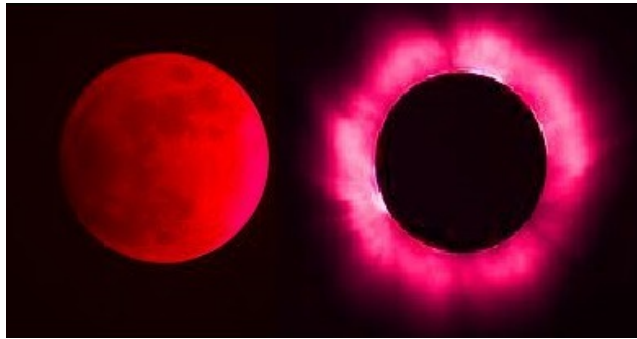


Notes on Eclipses

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The following is from **Appendix 10** of my book, *The Full Moons: Topical Letters in Esoteric Astrology*.

The study of eclipses is one of the essential areas of astrology, especially with respect to mundane astrology. An eclipse is defined astronomically as follows:

An eclipse is a type of syzygy,¹ most often thought of in relation to the sun and moon, but which is an astronomical event that occurs when an astronomical object is temporarily obscured, either by passing into the shadow of another body or by another body passing between the object and the viewer.²

Thus, eclipses are not the sole domain of the sun and moon, but can happen in relation to any planetary body. Therefore, if we think on the matter, eclipses happen all the time in relation to the sun, moon and other planetary bodies in the solar system. The important thing to remember is that eclipses are observer-based phenomena—i.e., they only have effects if the eclipse takes place on a sensitive point in the horoscope of a person or entity, those ‘sensitive points’ meaning planetary positions or angles¹ in the figure of the person or entity involved. In relation to the sun and the moon, eclipses take place only at the lunations—the new and full moons—and then only when the lunation takes place at up to 16° of zodiacal longitude, approximately, of the lunar nodes, although the figure stated is only seen at the start and end of the saros series for the particular family of the eclipse.

Astrologers differ as to what constitutes an eclipse with regard to astrological effect. Some astrologers only allow an orb (see glossary under “Astrological Terms”) of roughly five degrees between the eclipse point and the lunar node, whereas others will allow an orb of up to twelve degrees. In my own experience with eclipses I have seen that they all have effect, from the start to the end of any saros series, but the effect will vary in intensity. I would describe what I have deduced as follows:

An eclipse can be likened to a door between the material and subtle worlds which can be either closed or open. At any lunation, eclipse or not, that door stands ajar. At any eclipse, astronomically considered, the door stands open to a greater degree than is normally the case at a lunation. There is an intensification of the lunation, in other words. The closer the eclipse comes to totality, the more widely opened is the door. At a total eclipse the door stands opened wide to its fullest extent. It does not matter whether the eclipse is lunar or solar, although there is a difference as to the effect. It has been my experience thus far that solar eclipses have a greater effect upon the inception or ending of cycles in personal or world affairs, whereas lunar eclipses are more efficacious with regard to the

¹ Angles here refer to the ascendant, descendant, midheaven (medium coeli) and nadir (imum coeli).

bringing in of subjective forces to the world and with ingress or egress between the material and subtle worlds. Eclipses can also be likened to a lens—the closer to totality, the more focused the lens and thus the greater the power of the light. So total eclipses carry a greater degree of power in their effects than do other types of eclipses. [Not in the book, but I would add here that as to Mars effects there is no difference between solar and lunar eclipses. They can and do both produce Mars-related events—fires, crashes, violence, scientific breakthroughs, and the like.]

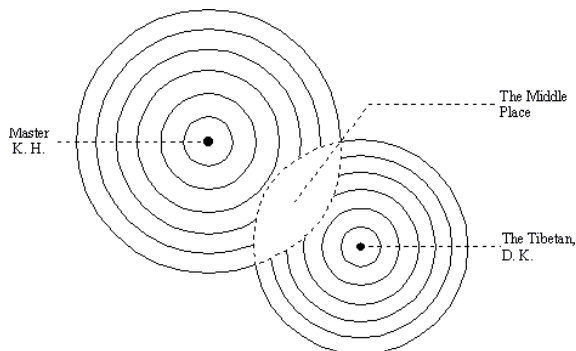
Expanding on the differences between solar and lunar eclipses as to their effects, eclipses can be used as a sort of ‘amplifier’ in service and meditative work, service being the main aim of all meditative work. The two types of eclipses—lunar and solar—have different functions in a way. However, both types of eclipses are important in any connection with meditative practice, as both of them appear at key times of the lunar month and thus both address certain aspects or attributes of spiritual practice and evolution, as outlined by the full moon festivals through the signs. A solar eclipse only takes place at the beginning of a lunar month (new moon) and thus would make a certain statement about what was to be evolved or put forward throughout that month, whereas a lunar eclipse, occurring as it would at the full moon, has the added emphasis of a particular spiritual potency and dispensation, as the full moon represents the alignment between the higher and the lower principles in our nature. It is said that there is one major eclipse of both types, lunar and solar, every year, and that these represent massed Approaches by the spiritual forces of the planet.³ Since there are at least four eclipses every year, it is not always clear as to when these two most important ones may occur, especially when they are not implicated in the spiritual high point of the year, but in general, it is most likely the total eclipses which are implied. Most eclipses in a given year are not total eclipses.

As with any sort of symbolism when considered esoterically, there are multiple levels of meaning and thus there is something more indicated by eclipses than simply the triggering of events of moment in world history. Such a case of these layers of meaning was highlighted in instructions to one of the disciples in the *Discipleship in the New Age* books by Alice Bailey.⁴ Consider the following quote:⁵

At this Middle Point [referring to the overlapping of influence between ashrams] there is a coming and a going; there is relation and contact; there is increased opportunity and inspiration; there are focal points of transmutation, of transition and of transformation. It is towards this area of merging and of fusion that you [the disciple being addressed] are now asked to move. Reflect upon this and get the deep spiritual implications which this picture of relationship between the ashrams can convey to you. By your effort, your determination and your understanding you can form part of the group which stands in this "Middle Chamber" (to use Masonic terminology) and can work from this point in the ashramic life. This important little diagram can be applied also to the relation between the Hierarchy and Humanity—the New Group of World Servers occupying this lower midway point.

It will be obvious to you also how the symbolism of an eclipse will come into your mind, for when the merging is complete, humanity and the Hierarchy will

be one; there will be no outer or inner and no middle chamber, but only complete unity. Later in our planetary history, this design will also depict the relation of Shamballa to the Hierarchy. It can also be applied most usefully to the relationship between soul and



personality, wherein the “encroaching light of the soul obliterates the dim light of the personality, and within that lighted area the disciple learns to stand.”

There are several types of eclipses:⁶

Solar

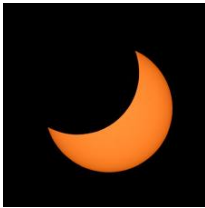


Total: The solar disc is totally obscured by the moon. Only the sun’s corona is visible. These only occur when the earth is at aphelion (furthest from the sun in its orbit), and this takes place around July each year. Thus, total solar eclipses only occur in or around summer in the northern hemisphere.



Annular: The moon is exactly in line with the sun, but because the earth is closer to the sun than at a total eclipse, the moon appears to be smaller. Thus, the moon does not totally block the sun. There is therefore a bright ring (annulus) around the moon. These are more common than total eclipses, and mostly take place in January, when the earth is at perihelion (closest to the sun).

Hybrid: Depending upon where one is viewing the eclipse on the earth due to the earth’s curvature, this eclipse can appear either total or annular. The moon is directly in line with the sun, but the location on the earth of the viewer will determine the type of eclipse. These are relatively rare. As of this writing, the last one took place on 9 April 2005 and the next one will take place on 3 November 2013. Observers at the ends of the eclipse shadow’s path would see it as an annular eclipse, while those observers in the middle of the eclipse path would witness a total eclipse.



Partial: Partial eclipses occur when the moon does not exactly align with the sun during the eclipse. The sun is thus always partially visible. These are the more common solar eclipses, and occur at both ends of the life of a saros cycle.

Solar eclipses are graded according to a scale of magnitude, with total eclipses having a grading greater than unity (one). The scale is based upon the size of the moon relative to the sun. Thus, annular and partial eclipses will have magnitudes lesser than unity. Total eclipses are rare events, and only recur at a given location every 360 to 410 years, although every 18 months there will be a total solar eclipse somewhere on the earth. A solar eclipse will last usually fewer than 5 minutes. It is very rare to have a solar eclipse lasting more than 7 minutes, with 7 min 31 sec being the maximum time for any total eclipse. In any millennium there are typically fewer than ten lasting over 7 minutes. The last one took place on 20 June 1955, near an Aries point. Interestingly, it produced hardly any cataclysmic events, though it did usher in some media icons. The last total eclipse lasting more than 7 minutes was on 20 June 1972. Most years there are only two solar eclipses, 6 months apart approximately, although some years there will be three or four in a year. Rarely, there are years where there are five. The last such year was 1935. Those people with a mind for history and knowledge of how eclipses work will know that those eclipses set up the conditions that ushered in WWII. Other such years in modern history were 1693, 1758, 1805, 1823, 1870, and there will not be another year in which five solar eclipses occur until 2206.

Lunar



Total: The moon is totally darkened by the earth’s shadow, and lies totally within the darkest part of the shadow, the umbra. There is no solar radiation in

the umbra. The pictured eclipse is sometimes known as a “blood moon” due to the red coloration of the shadow imparted by the earth’s atmosphere.



Penumbral: (Also called ‘appulse eclipse.’) The moon is only partially darkened by the earth’s shadow, and then by the lighter part of the shadow, the penumbra. There is partial solar radiation within the penumbra.



Total Penumbral: The moon lies totally within the penumbra, and not at all within the umbra. These are very rare, occurring only up to nine times per century.



Partial: Only a part of the moon lies in the umbra during the eclipse. Note that this is not a crescent moon, as the moon would return to full within a few hours.

Selenelion: Both the sun and the moon are visible during the lunar eclipse. These are only visible just before sunset or just after sunrise and lie completely on the horizon at nearly opposite points of the sky. The moon would appear as a reddish crescent just above the horizon.

Unlike solar eclipses, lunar eclipses are visible for several hours at a time from anywhere in the night sky. Like solar eclipses, they are graded according to a scale, the Danjon Scale, after Adré Danjon. It is as follows, and as can be seen in the accompanying pictures, respectively:

L=0: Very dark surface. Moon almost invisible at totality.

L=1: Dark eclipse, grayish-brown in color.

L=2: Deep red, rust-colored eclipse. Very dark central shadow, but outer edge relatively bright.

L=3: Brick red eclipse. Umbral shadow has bright yellow rim.

L=4: Very bright copper-red to orange eclipse. Umbral shadow is bluish.



All eclipses are grouped according to the geometry of the eclipse, most commonly in what is termed the *saros cycle*, named after *sar*, a Babylonian astronomical measure. A saros is a period of 223 synodic months, the period of time it takes for the moon to return to a line between the sun and the earth. Without going too much into detail, each saros series contains between 69 and 87 eclipses, each eclipse in the series being separated by a saros, or roughly 18 years 11 days. Each series begins with a partial eclipse at either the ascending (north) or descending (south) lunar node. For solar eclipses the pathway of the first and final eclipses in a saros series is always around one of the earth’s poles, the series starting at one and ending at the opposite pole. The starting and ending poles depend upon the node involved. North node series eclipses begin at the north pole and vice-

versa. Saros series carry odd numbers for ascending node eclipses and vice-versa. There is no such clear nomenclature for lunar eclipses.

Saros series take between 1226 and 1550 years to complete. Within any saros series, the number of total eclipses is relatively small, occurring toward the second half of the series, whereas the greater number of them are annular, with partial eclipses at both ends of the series. The eclipses that produce the most in terms of world events are the total eclipses, but the annular eclipses can produce prodigious results themselves. To the astrologer, the inception of a saros series is an important consideration because the inception chart for the series—the chart for the first eclipse of the series—will show the general character of the eclipses contained therein.

Some factors that bear consideration with respect to eclipses⁷

- At any astrological conjunction or opposition with the sun, an eclipse between the sun, earth and the planetary body involved is likely to have occurred, due to the fact that the planetary nodes usually have a very low declination, unless they are asteroids or plutinos. Such conjunctions and oppositions thus indicate sensitive points in a horoscope when they have taken place on planetary positions or angles in the figure. The character of the other planetary body involved will show the nature and purpose of the eclipse for the individual or entity. Such eclipses will indicate evolutionary possibilities relative to the type of planetary energies involved.
- Astrological conjunctions and oppositions between the moon and any planetary body also likely indicate that some type of eclipse has occurred, in like manner to the preceding point. Such eclipses will indicate the need for adjustments to be made in the worldly affairs of the person or entity involved to enable greater freedom for spiritual unfoldment.
- Greater and lesser periods of eclipse activity come in ‘clumps’ relative to the type of period under consideration or the nature of the figure under consideration. This is due to the transits of the lunar nodes in their roughly 19-year cycle. There will therefore be peaks in the effects of eclipses roughly every 4½ years, running thus: a peak at the time of the series of eclipses for 4½ years, followed by a lull of 4½ years, followed by another peak at 4½ years as the eclipses take place at the opposite node, followed by another lull 4½ years later. These are only approximations. For figures where the planets are fairly evenly distributed throughout the chart this cycle of ebb and flow will not be so noticeable. This cycle is decidedly noticeable with regard to the spiritual high points of the year—Aries through Gemini.
- The various saros series track certain efforts by the various groups within the Kingdom of Souls and other more advanced groups or Beings to further the spiritual evolution of this world. This is especially evident with regard to the Manu (governing world changes) and the Mahachohan (governing world culture). It is not so evident with regard to the world Teachers, as this refers more to the evolution of consciousness than it does to events, and is thus not so outwardly obvious. The effects of eclipses with regard to consciousness are there nonetheless.
- The sign in which the *Sun* is found in any saros-type eclipse will define the major importance and quality of psyche evolved through the eclipse, regardless of whether the eclipse is solar or lunar.
- An eclipse is never an isolated event, but might rather be seen as an installment relating to a process or unfolding story, that process being tied in with the saros series involved. The cycles involved are social and racial, and apply to groups of souls. The cycles and efforts by

the various kingdoms in nature overlap and interweave. In all, there are approximately 75 to 90 saros series, lunar and solar combined, active at any one time.

- The eclipses that take place when the sun is in the signs Aries through Gemini are the most important with regard to the Kingdom of Souls and the world Teachers. Secondly, eclipses that take place when the sun is in the signs Libra through Sagittarius, and which activate the eclipses that have taken place previously in the Aries-through-Gemini interval, further distribute the work that was intended in the high point of the year and add their own ‘coloring’ to those efforts. These so-called secondary eclipses can be exceedingly powerful in their effects as they work in tandem with the primary eclipses, no matter if they are total eclipses or not.

¹ A syzygy is a nearly straight-line configuration of three or more planetary bodies in a gravitational system. The term can also be a descriptor for the generators of a mathematical module, such as in the factors necessary for the generation of prenatal charts in astrology, for example. For further information of the implementation of prenatal charts in astrology, search for the term in the user guide in Esoteric Technology’s *Solar Fire* astrology program, www.esotech.com.au.

² For further information on the science of eclipses, see: www.eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html.

³ Alice A Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, the section: “Work of the Seed Groups,” starting on p. 46.

⁴ Alice A Bailey, *Discipleship in the New Age, I & II*, Lucis Publishing.

⁵ *Ibid*, *Volume II*, p. 610.

⁶ Data and images about the physical characteristics of solar and lunar eclipses are taken from: <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>.

⁷ A summation of conclusions by the author.