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## Looking at Eclipses from Both Sides

**by Zane B Stein**

If you have looked at eclipses astrologically you may have noticed a strange fact: the time that astronomers list for the time of maximum eclipse is usually different than the one your astrology program gives you, and sometimes the difference can be quite a few minutes. Why is that?

We can give you a clear explanation, and then we can show you how you can adjust a setting (in both **Solar Fire**, and **Astro Gold for Mac**), so that you can calculate the charts for the times of both the astrological and the astronomical eclipses.

Let's begin by comparing the eclipse definitions.

### **Astronomical**

Definition: According to NASA, "An eclipse occurs when one heavenly body such as a moon or planet moves into the shadow of another heavenly body." During a Lunar Eclipse, the "Earth moves between the Sun and the Moon, Earth blocks the sunlight instead of light hitting the Moon's surface, and Earth's shadow falls on the Moon," but if it is a Solar Eclipse, "the Moon moves between the Sun and Earth, the Moon blocks the light of the Sun instead of light hitting the Earth's surface, and the Moon's shadow falls on the Earth."

### **Astrological**

Definition: When the Sun and Moon are at the exact same degree, minute and second of a sign (New Moon) or opposite signs (Full Moon), AND the lunation occurs not far from the North or South Lunar Nodes, you have, respectfully, a Solar or Lunar Eclipse. How close to the nodes must the lunation be? A solar eclipse may occur when the luminaries are with  $18^{\circ} 31'$  from either node, and will definitely occur when they are within  $15^{\circ} 21'$ . When the Sun and (or?) Moon occurs (travels?) within  $12^{\circ} 15'$  of the nodes, there may be a lunar eclipse, and when they are within  $9^{\circ} 30'$  a lunar eclipse is certain.

So, astronomically, an eclipse is determined by a shadow blocking the light, but no attention is paid to the astrological coordinates of the luminaries, while astrologically an eclipse is determined when there is an exact astrological aspect, but no attention is paid to any shadow being cast.

There is one more factor to look at, and it will enable you to see how the two ways to calculate an eclipse are connected. It's the Moon's latitude, which is how far north or south of the ecliptic the luminary is. (The Ecliptic is the circle the Sun appears to make as it seems to travel around the earth.) The plane of the Moon's orbit is tilted, compared to the ecliptic. So for part of its journey the Moon is travelling north of the ecliptic, part of the time moving south of the ecliptic, and the two places where the moon crosses the ecliptic going from south to north (or visa versa) are what we call the Moon's Nodes. How far north or south the moon is at any given

moment is its latitude, and when the moon is at one of the nodes, its latitude is zero. Lining up the Sun, Moon and Earth is necessary in order to cast a shadow. The closer the Moon's latitude is to zero, the straighter the line these three bodies make, and the greater percent of the Earth, or Moon will be covered in shadow.

Remembering that the Moon at zero latitude is on one of the nodes, this tells you that the closer the eclipse is to a node the closer the astronomical and astrological eclipse times will be. If an eclipse ever occurs exactly on a lunar node, the times given by astronomy for the moment of maximum eclipse, and by astrology for the Sun conjunct or opposition Moon, will be identical.

## **CALCULATING ASTROLOGICAL VS ASTRONOMICAL ECLIPSES**

### **Solar Fire**

Prior to calculating an eclipse chart, click Preferences, then select Edit Settings from the drop-down menu. When the Preferences window opens, click on the Eclipses tab, and then choose either "Use exact lunar phase" (for the astrological eclipse chart) or "Use maximum eclipse time" (for the astronomical eclipse chart.)

Click the Chart menu, then select Lunar Phase from the drop-down menu. Select the appropriate chart-type and settings for the Eclipse chart you would like to create then click OK to create the chart.

### **Astro Gold for macOS**

Click the Eclipses icon at the top of your main Astro Gold for macOS screen, then enter the search details to find the eclipse(s) you want to look at. After the search has returned an eclipse list, highlight the one you want to run a chart for and click the Calculate Chart button. At the bottom of the drop-down menu, choose either "Use Exact Phase" (for the astrological eclipse chart) or "Use Max Eclipse" (for the astronomical eclipse chart.) Then click Calculate Chart again and select which Chart you would like the Eclipse Chart to be

created as – Chart 1, Chart 2, Chart 3 or Chart 4 (please note – this will replace the open chart you have in that space with the new Eclipse chart).

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