

An introduction to interpreting the Venus cycle

This article gives an introduction to interpreting the synodic cycle of Venus – its phases. Looking at Venus by sign, house and aspect is the usual way of looking at Venus in the chart, but looking at its phase at birth and looking at the secondary progressions from progressed Sun to progressed Venus can give much more information about approaches to relationship and about values.

The Sumerian myth of Venus

The telling of this myth helps in understanding the phases of Venus. In Sumerian myth, Inanna (Venus) was Queen of Heaven. Ereshkigal was Queen of the Underworld. On the death of Ereshkigal's husband, Inanna descended into the Underworld to attend his funeral. She was sensible enough to take precautions and asked her aids to rescue her if she did not return to Heaven within three days. Like any other visitor, Inanna was stripped of her finery at each gate on her descent. At the seventh gate, she was left completely naked, killed by the Queen of the Underworld, hung on a hook and left to rot. To cut a long story short, Ereshkigal would only agree to release her body if a substitute was handed over by her rescuers to replace her. Inanna was revived by her aids and she said that she would protect those who had remained loyal to her.

However, when she returned to Heaven she found that her lover, Dumuzi, had betrayed her and had taken over her realm, claiming that he was now King of Heaven. Worst of all he had not mourned her. She was very angry and, in revenge, she sent him to the Underworld. He tried to escape and, after much haggling, Inanna agreed that he could swap places with his sister, each taking it in turns to spend time in Ereshkigal's realm. There are many versions of this myth which has been linked to the retrograde period of Venus. Some see the myth as the gradual loss of women's political and economic power. Others see it as a death and rebirth of the way people relate to others and of their values.

The retrograde inferior conjunction of Venus with the Sun - the new phase

As Venus enters its retrograde period, it is ahead of the Sun in the order of the Zodiac signs. It reaches exact inferior conjunction when it is in the same degree and minute as the Sun. Gradually, while still retrograde, it becomes behind the Sun in Zodiacal order. The new phase starts when Venus is right in the middle of its retrograde period, conjunct the Sun. A person born on this phase tends to be reflective and a little wary of social interactions and conventional relationships. S/he tends to be subjective paying more attention to his or her inner world of thoughts and feelings which can dominate his or her approach to relationships. Just because an individual is born during the inferior conjunction does not mean, however, that s/he ignores personal relationships, but there may be deep issues of a Venusian nature which s/he wants to explore. Venus only goes retrograde about every 19 months, for an average of 6 weeks, so a smaller percentage of the population will be born during its retrograde period. The person may be on his or her own journey into the 'underworld'

Venus as morning star

As Venus turns direct, it has already started to appear as a morning star, rising before the Sun and behind the Sun in Zodiacal order. At this phase of the cycle, it is known as Venus Lucifer, the Bringer of Light, and as Venus Phosphorus. Venus is in its 'masculine' phase and is the warrior who comes out fighting in an attempt to re-adjust the balance and creative harmony. This battle may be a collective one or a personal one. This Venus is spontaneous, impulsive and creative. S/he can bring in new values and new ways of relating, but s/he may feel vulnerable while at the same time willing to defend him or herself if crossed. S/he is an independent soul at heart, having less time for all consuming relationships. This does not mean that morning star Venus is not interested in relationship, but the emphasis on what kind of relationship is different to that of an evening star individual.

The first quarter phase – Venus peaks at morning star phase

This phase starts when Venus reaches the first semi-square with the Sun as a morning star. This phase then peaks when Venus reaches greatest elongation west (west of the Sun). Venus is then at his or her most independent and less willing to compromise with others. Some astrologers, in the past, have interpreted the semi-squares as divorce aspects and it is easy to see why when Venus is in its 'first quarter' phase. Perhaps the independent spirit of Venus is too much for a more compromising partner to cope with. When Venus reaches the second semi-square with the Sun (as a morning star after greatest elongation west) this 'first quarter' phase ends. Slowly, Venus starts to move behind the Sun, still as a morning star, and someone born on this part of the cycle, is more open to compromising in relationship, but is still an independent spirit. In mundane astrology, morning star Venus is often associated with war and battle.

Venus at superior conjunction with the Sun – full phase

When Venus is conjunct the Sun in the ephemeris and it is not retrograde, it is at superior conjunction, in the full phase. Venus is now in the phase of love and battle. The person born on this phase tends to be more objective and aware of inner conflicts about relationships and about his or her values. The desire for compromise in relationship is stronger as s/he is able to take other people's needs into account. Here is the man or woman who can often throw light on relationship difficulties, so potentially s/he could have mediating skills. Because of the self-awareness and objective outlook, Venus is less likely to put up with abusive relationships.

Venus as evening star

After the superior conjunction, Venus appears as an evening star, setting after the Sun in the west. It is known as Venus Hesperus and is in the 'feminine' phase of the cycle. For someone born on this phase, relationship is very important as Venus is prepared to compromise and take into account the needs of others. S/he is more likely to want to share his or her life with another. Relationships are often harmonious as Venus is in the peaceful, loving phase.

The last quarter phase – Venus peaks at evening star phase

Venus is now very much in his or her most peaceful and harmonious state. Venus is east of the Sun, setting after the Sun. This phase starts when Venus reaches the first semi-square with the Sun well after superior conjunction when it is an evening star. It peaks when Venus reaches greatest elongation east (east of the Sun). Venus is then at his or her most diplomatic state and willing to compromise. Then there will be a final semi-square between Venus and the Sun as Venus leaves this phase in its cycle. However as Yin turns into Yang (when things reach their maximum power they begin to turn into their opposite) the seeds of doubt may be sown into the mind of Venus and someone born on this phase may begin to question values and attitudes to relationship. However, they are only seeds of doubt at this stage and, perhaps, barely noticeable.

Retrograde Venus as evening star

Eventually, Venus begins to turn retrograde as an evening star, before it reaches inferior conjunction again. Slowly this planet begins to disappear, after it has turned retrograde. When someone is born on this part of the cycle, the seeds of doubt have been sown, values are questioned and the status quo, as far as relationships are concerned, is no longer taken for granted. A new cycle begins as Venus reaches inferior conjunction with the Sun.

Progressions

As far as the Venus cycle is concerned, the important progressions are from **progressed Sun to progressed Venus**. This does not mean that other progressions involving progressed Sun to natal Venus, or progressed Venus to natal Sun, are unimportant, but they are not particularly significant in terms of a major Venus phase a person may experience in his or her life time. A person is only going to experience a fraction of the Venus cycle by progression and may never reach one of the major phases. However, the fraction of the cycle experienced by progression varies considerably from person to person, depending on whether Venus is travelling fast or slow (on whether it is at perihelion or aphelion).

The period from inferior conjunction (the 'new' phase) to greatest elongation west (the maximum distance of Venus from the Sun as a morning star - its 'first quarter' phase) is approximately two months and one week. Therefore, a person born on the inferior conjunction could reach greatest elongation west by progression when they are about 67 years old, but they may not depending on how fast or slow Venus is travelling.

The period from greatest elongation west to superior conjunction (the 'full' phase) is approximately seven months and one week. No one would live long enough, if they were born when Venus was at greatest elongation west, to reach superior conjunction by progression.

The period from superior conjunction to greatest elongation east (the maximum distance of Venus from the Sun as an evening star and the 'last quarter' phase) is approximately

seven months and one week. Again, nobody would live long enough, if they were born on this phase to reach greatest elongation east by progression.

The period from greatest elongation east to inferior conjunction is approximately two months and one week. Someone born on greatest elongation east could reach inferior conjunction at about 67 years old by progression, depending on how fast Venus was travelling.

Note that Venus appears to travel faster in its synodic cycle from greatest elongation east to greatest elongation west (because it is on the near side of the Sun) than from greatest elongation west to greatest elongation east when it transits the far side of the Sun.

If a person was born when Venus is stationary retrograde, it would take about two to three weeks to travel to inferior conjunction and roughly the same period from inferior conjunction to when Venus goes stationary direct. Venus is on average retrograde for about six weeks. This means it takes 14 to 21 years by progression from stationary retrograde to inferior conjunction and about the same period again from inferior conjunction to when Venus goes direct as a morning star.

Regardless of whether Venus is at greatest elongation east or west ('first and last quarter' phases), the total period between the first semi-square (between Venus and the Sun) and the second one can vary from 20 days to 50 days (by progression 20 years to 50 years between the two semi-squares).

In order to interpret the progressed Venus phases, look at the meanings of the phases in the natal chart, study your own progressed Venus phases and talk to your family, friends and clients to see what it means for them. The sources for much of this material have come from traditional astrology and from the 20th century humanistic astrologers, Dane Rudhyar and Alexander Ruperti. Experiment and do your own research.

References

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