



AN ASTRONOMICAL VIEW OF VENUS RETROGRADE

by Gary P. Caton

“Here would another have ended his journey in the skies: having dealt with the signs against which move the deities of [the] planets. But me the heavens entice to hasten on a tour of all the stars in the sky.”

— Marcus Manilius, *Astronomica*, 1st century C.E.¹

Like the great astronomical poet of Roman antiquity, in my own career I too have been consistently called toward building a more complete view of the sky. My early collaborations with my Sky Astrology Conference co-founder Adam Gainsburg eventually led me into extensive research on the actual celestial mechanics of retrograde motion. Over the last several years, I discovered that planetary motion is much more wonderfully complex than is often depicted, and that the planets actually perform various kinds of intricate looping dances in different parts of the sky.² I’ve since used these loops to make successful public predictions on Facebook, including forecasting Peyton Manning’s second Super Bowl victory (before the playoffs began) and Trump’s post-convention comeback. It is hoped that the more expansive views from these relatively unexplored territories may similarly serve to open the reader’s mind to new possibilities of interpretation, and perhaps thereby prove useful and ultimately re-vivifying to our great art.

Most modern astrologers have grown accustomed to describing planetary motion only in terms of zodiacal de-

grees, what is known astronomically as *celestial longitude*. However, the distance of a planet east or west of the vernal equinox (0° Aries) really defines its position in only a single dimension. If this single dimension were enough to adequately locate an object and describe planetary motion, then all conjunctions would be seen in the sky as two planets occupying the same exact space — what is technically known as an occultation. However, as anyone who does actual stargazing can tell you, occultations are very much the exception rather

Planets frequently make their most radical changes in celestial latitude during retrograde motion.

than the rule. Because each planet has its own unique orbital plane, most of the time planets that are conjunct in celestial longitude (i.e., in the same zodiacal degree) are still more or less separated in the vertical dimension. Thus, it is important to define any object’s location — including planets but especially fixed stars — in terms of its vertical dimension as well.

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For instance, despite being in entirely different constellations, both the stars Arcturus of Boötes and Spica of Virgo are actually located longitudinally at approximately 24° Libra. This is also close to the current location of Jupiter (March 2017). However, anyone who has been outside late at night recently, and located Jupiter, will tell you that there is only one bright star anywhere close to Jupiter. This is because the star Arcturus is in a constellation that is very far north of the ecliptic (the Earth's orbital plane). That is, Arcturus is located in a very high northern *celestial latitude*, the astronomical term used for the vertical north/south measurement along the ecliptic. So, while it is true that if we project Arcturus's position at a right angle to the ecliptic, we come up with about 24° Libra, and this is the same celestial longitude as Spica, it is also nonetheless true that Arcturus is located more than 30° north of Spica — which all astrologers know is very far for a conjunction! (See **Diagram 1**, following page)

Although no planet ever reaches the extreme latitude of Arcturus, some planets do reach as much as 8° of latitude on either side of the ecliptic. This means that two planets in the same degree of celestial longitude are often separated by several degrees of celestial latitude, and sometimes even as much 10° or more. For this reason, it is important to think of the zodiac as a *band* of sky that also has a very significant vertical dimension, and to remember to take into account the celestial latitude of a planet as well as its longitude. This is especially true during retrograde motion, because planets frequently make their most radical changes in celestial latitude at this time. In fact, when seen with the added dimension of celestial latitude, rather than a simple back-and-forth movement, retrograde motion becomes a very peculiar series of intricate looping motions wherein the planets travel in all four directions (north, south, east, and west) with respect to the ecliptic, all in a relatively short time.

By carefully mapping planetary motion in terms of both longitude (east/west) and latitude (north/south) on the ecliptic, I have learned that there are at minimum eight basic loop shapes that planets can make during retrogrades.³ Furthermore, I discovered that the variances in the shape of these loops depends on the part of the sky in which the retrograde is occurring and the relationship between that part of the sky

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and a given planet's nodal axis. Astronomically, a heliocentric (i.e., from the point of view of the Sun) planetary node is the place where any given planet's orbital plane intersects with the Earth's orbital plane, aka the ecliptic. A planet's north (or ascending) node is the place where it crosses the ecliptic from southern latitude to northern latitude. Conversely, the south (or descending) node is the place where a planet crosses the ecliptic from northern latitude to southern latitude.⁴ I've found that whenever a planet retrogrades near one of its nodes, it traces a peculiar Z-shaped loop as it is crossing the ecliptic. For Venus, her retrograde loops take on these Z shapes near her (heliocentric) nodes, currently located at 17° Sagittarius–Gemini. (See **Diagram 2**, following page.)

This new model that I've discovered explains why the 2017 Venus retrograde in Aries forms a northern latitude loop, because longitudinally Aries is located *after* Venus's north node in Sagittarius and *before* the south node in Gemini. Whenever the retrograde is located in the signs proceeding from Sagittarius (north node) to Gemini (south node), Venus will make northerly loops. Whenever the retrograde is located in the signs proceeding from Gemini (south node) to Sagittarius (north node), Venus will make southerly loops. This model also explains why the other Venus retrogrades (chrono-

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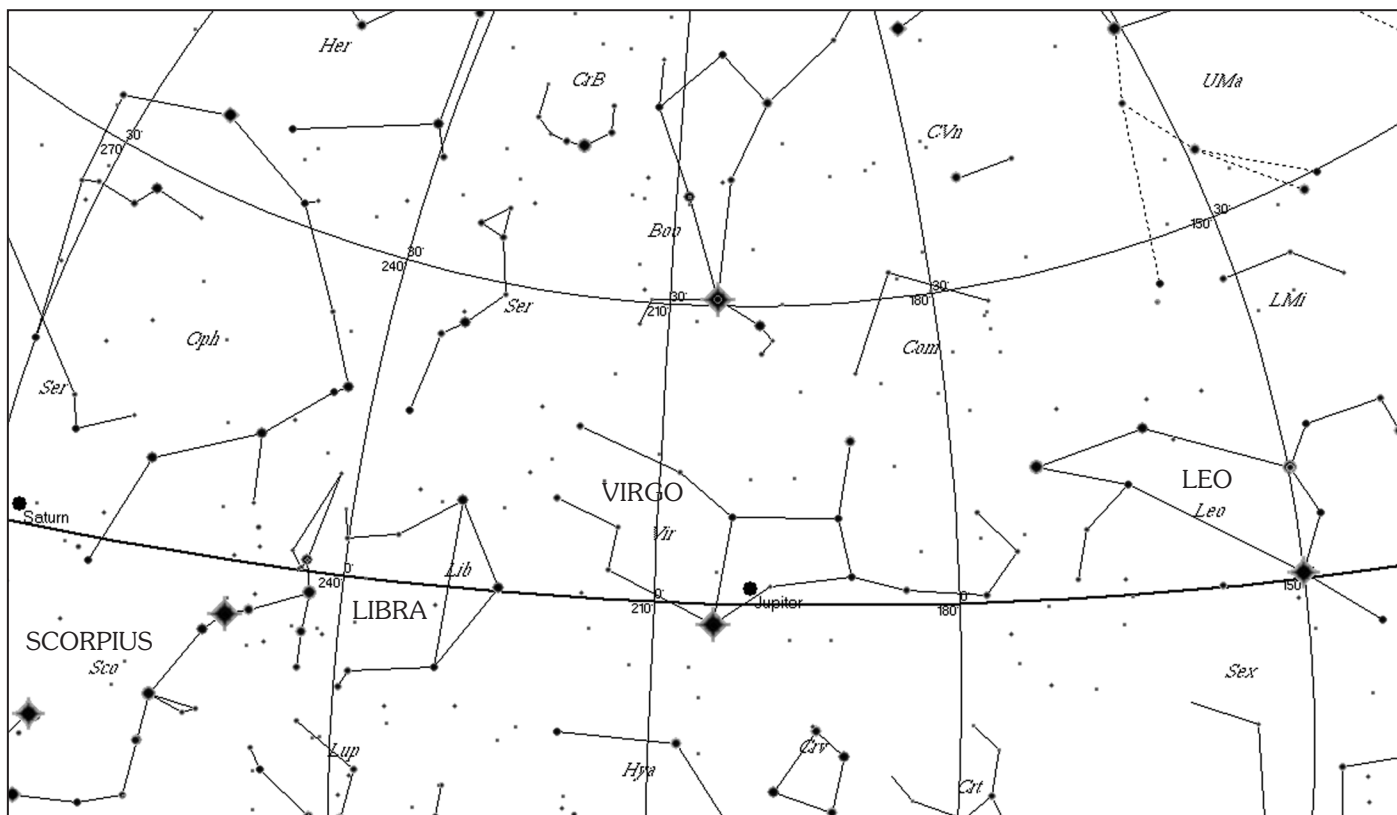


Diagram 1 shows the zodiacal constellations (from right to left) of Leo, Virgo, Libra, and Scorpius. The dark horizontal line running through these constellations is the ecliptic, and there is another line above and parallel to this, which marks 30° north latitude. The positions of Saturn and Jupiter are mapped for the vernal equinox, March 21, 2017. The vertical lines are the coordinates for the cusps of the tropical signs..

logically, the next Venus retrogrades occur in Scorpio, Gemini, Capricorn, and Leo) have very different shapes.

Furthermore, as Arielle Guttman has most excellently demonstrated,⁵ the five signs in which the Venus retrogrades occur slowly change over time, as indicated in Diagram 2 by arrows moving counter-clockwise. What I've discovered this means for the Venus loops is that eventually the arm of the "Venus Star," which currently forms a northern loop in Capricorn, will gradually take on the Z shape of the loop in Sagittarius, as we get closer to the next occurrences of the astronomical transits of Venus.⁶ Likewise, the arm of the Venus Star that currently produces northern loops in Aries (such as the one we are studying in this article) will eventually move into Pisces, where it will form a higher and more symmetrical northern loop, due to Venus's being at her "north bending," i.e., the place where Venus's orbit reaches its farthest north latitude before becoming gradually more southerly.

When we begin to look more closely at these loops, some very important concepts emerge that shake the very foundations of our previous understanding of retrograde motion and its meaning. First, it should be abundantly clear that planets do not simply move direct and retrograde, or back and forth across the same part of the sky. Therefore, no matter how many times you've heard it repeated, when viewed in more than one dimension there simply is no exact point in the sky that any planet ever crosses over three times. In short, the standard diagram of retrograde motion routinely

Diagram 2: Venus Loops



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used (see **Diagram 3**, following page) is at best a simplified reduction of celestial reality — and at worst inaccurate and misleading. It is important to be clear that this diagram does not reflect celestial reality, but rather represents a simplified one-dimensional view from which we should be very careful not to draw too broad a conclusion, lest we appear amateurish or ignorant to those who are aware of and familiar with actual astronomical observation.

Rather than a simple back and forth, an astronomically correct view of retrograde motion clearly demonstrates a *simultaneous* shift in *both* the east/west longitudinal motion of the planet *as well as* the north/south latitudinal motion, thus causing a variety of two-dimensional loop shapes to be formed. And since there are at least eight different basic loop shapes (as shown in Diagram 2), it is obvious that all retrogrades are clearly *not* the same. From this, it should also be obvious that we can't really give a generic definition of Venus retrograde (or any retrograde) without also explaining that there are several significant variations from that generic description.

Rethinking the “Shadow”

Going further, the most important modern principle that I think these loops call into question is the so-called shadow zone, which precedes and follows the retrograde proper. We are often told that the possibility for retrograde kinds of experience begins as the planet first crosses the degree of its eventual station direct and doesn't end until the planet, in direct motion, finally crosses the degree of the retrograde station. But since these retrograde loops show that all retrogrades are not the same, then it follows that longitudinally based “shadow” zones should not be able to be applied universally.



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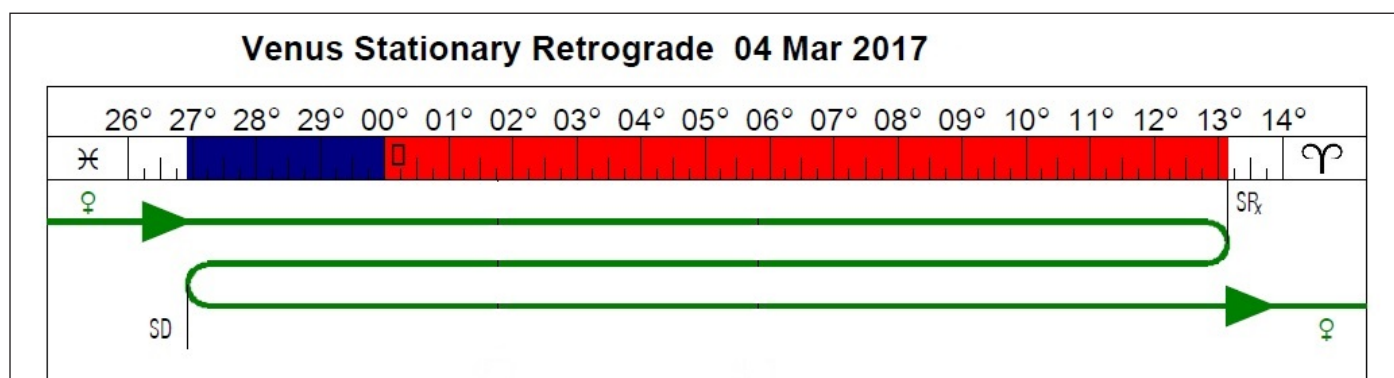
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Diagram 3: Venus's 2017 retrograde motion depicted in zodiacal longitude



Most philosophers believe that, other things being equal, simpler theories are better (the law of parsimony). When we understand retrogrades holistically, as a kind of circuitous motion that produces two-dimensional loops, then the theory of longitudinally based shadow zones applied universally to every retrograde appears simplistic, rather than simple. These shadow zones are the product of a one-dimensional model trying to grapple with the multidimensional reality we call life. It is an admirable attempt to try to match astrology with human experience, but it appears to make, and/or it leads to, assumptions that simply are not true. This is not helpful for the respectability of astrology as an intellectual endeavor or profession.

A theory attributing and tracking pre-/post-retrograde experiences of change with actual observable and measurable latitudinal shifts is much more direct and thus simpler. Additionally, since it is obvious that some loops have larger amounts of pre-/post-Rx latitudinal changes than others, and that these latitudinal shifts occur in *different parts* of the various loops, then a theory based on latitudinal shifts is actually much more specific and testable. The law of parsimony seems to suggest that the standard dogma of shadow zones needs to be re-examined in light of the astronomical reality of retrograde loops.

For instance, with respect to the 2017 Venus loop, I suspect that the days around the times when Venus crosses the ecliptic (January 17, heading north, and May 9, heading south)⁷ might be rather important and serve just as well or better to begin and complete event timelines than the days when Venus crosses into (January 30) or out of (May 18) the so-called shadow zone. In fact, the January 17 date already makes much more sense as a beginning date for the current Venus retrograde loop, given that Inauguration Day is January 20, and at the time of writing this (late November 2016), many groups are already planning protests for that day. By definition, protests are a call for change of direction.

Venus Loops in Recent History

There are clear historical precedents to reinforce this view that Venus crossing the ecliptic represents an important shift in the direction of events. Since Venus cycles repeat in multiples of eight years, then every eight years the president of the United States is inaugurated under similar conditions as this year. This means that Obama was inaugurated in 2009, under a similar Venus loop. Facing a severe economic downturn,

Obama's initial goal was having Congress move a stimulus bill to his desk for signing by Inauguration Day. But this had to be revised and postponed for a month until President's Day in February. So, here we can already see the changes in plans signified by the beginning of the retrograde loop.

More importantly, though Obama's stimulus package was eventually passed, it was without the support of a single Republican vote. For a president who had campaigned on bipartisanship, this was a significant setback and indeed a change of course that set the tone not just for the rest of his first term but for the entire eight years of his presidency. In hindsight, it's possible that if Obama had taken more time and been more diplomatic toward Republicans, then things may have turned out differently. But in the justifiable rush to get things moving, his "I won" comments in rebuffing Republican concerns, just days after being inaugurated, seem to have helped to set a combative partisan tone (one of the negative traits of tropical Aries, the sign of the upcoming Venus station retrograde) that would ultimately cause him to revise many of his plans.⁸

If we look back two Venus cycles (16 years ago) to George W. Bush, the last president who failed to win the popular vote, we see that he also faced pretty intense demonstrations on Inauguration Day. This doesn't bode well for Donald Trump, because he is far less popular than Bush was at the time. It's also possible that Trump could face an even more volatile backlash, because this is the first Venus retrograde to occur in Aries since the most recent ingress of Uranus to that sign.

Going back three Venus cycles (24 years ago) to Bill Clinton, we can see the most obvious example yet. One day after his inauguration, as Venus was crossing the ecliptic and starting the retrograde loop, Bill Clinton named his relatively inexperienced wife Hillary as the head of the health care task force. Hillary quickly ended up embroiled in several scandals ("Nannygate" was already underway), and many feel that this ultimately proved to be a disastrous choice that directly led to the Republican Revolution of 1994 (and perhaps, ultimately, 2016). In fact, for the Clintons the other crossing of the ecliptic by Venus (moving south) in mid May 1993 was equally inauspicious. This was when associate White House counsel William Kennedy requested that the FBI look into improprieties in the travel office, which led to the firings on May 19 that became known as "Travelgate." Some believed that the Clintons had fired people unjustly simply to make room for

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their friends; this led to an investigation that, in turn, led to further “Filegate” and Whitewater investigations.

The 2017 Venus Retrograde

In the astronomically correct **Diagram 4** (below), we see that Venus crosses the ecliptic moving north on January 17, 2017 and (going right to left) gradually increases in latitude until late February. For past presidents, this seems to have been a time when they were either taking it easy and announcing long-term plans (G. W. Bush) or getting things accomplished, though at what was later revealed to be a high cost in the long term (Clinton and Obama). Venus makes a relatively dramatic shift north, on either side of the retrograde station (March 4), and then “levels out” (around March 14) in terms of latitude for much of the retrograde proper, though beginning to move slightly southward after the inferior conjunction (March 25). For the Clinton administration, this “leveling” was symbolized by Janet Reno’s confirmation, after the embarrassment of having failed to confirm the two “Nannygate” appointments. For the Obama administration, because of the lack of bipartisan support Obama had to travel outside Washington and appear at town hall meetings, in prime-time news conferences, and on late-night talk shows to garner support for his \$3.5 trillion budget proposal.

At the beginning of April 2017, we see that Venus begins to move more dramatically southward, rapidly losing latitude during the middle and later parts of the month. This begins the

segment of the loop with the highest daily rate of change in latitude, and from this I suspect that the most volatile period of this retrograde loop should be a period of ten days or so before and after the station direct (April 15). Historically, early to mid April did prove to be a volatile time for both the Clinton and Bush administrations. After Clinton finally managed to get a woman confirmed to one of his top-level cabinet positions, Janet Reno, she would ultimately take the blame for the loss of life in the fires that resulted from the final assault on the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas; this disaster would later serve as fuel for other extremists to attempt to justify atrocities like the Oklahoma City bombing.⁹ For Bush, his early presidency was much quieter, and the international incident of Hainan Island in April 2001 turned out more fortunately for him and the country. The carefully worded “letter of two sorries” expressed regret over the mid-air collision that resulted in the death of a Chinese pilot, but stopped short of an apology — which allowed both nations to save face.¹⁰

So, what lessons might we take from these loops to apply to the upcoming Venus retrograde in our own lives? Perhaps most importantly, these loops can serve to grant us insight into the nature and function of retrograde motion itself. If direct motion signifies what is “normal,” then it follows that retrograde motion signifies something that somehow runs counter to, or flies in the face of, one or more norms or socio-cultural expectations. However, once we understand that a retrograde planet is not simply moving backward, but in fact is moving in all four directions (north, south, east, and west) in a very short time, then we can see that the greatest gift a retrograde planet offers us is perspective.

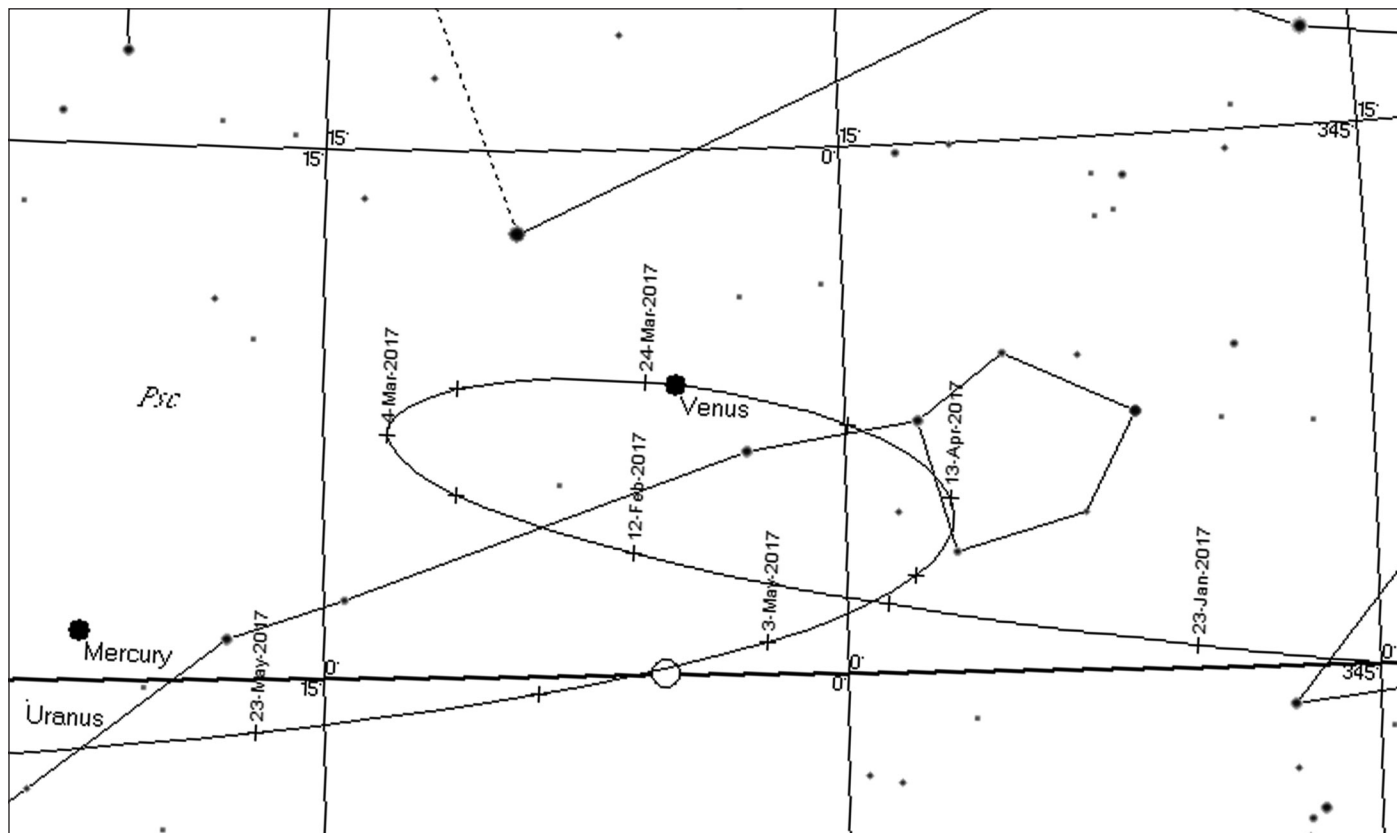


Diagram 4: Astronomical path of Venus retrograde in 2017, depicted in both celestial longitude and celestial latitude

*Individually, we may find
that this Venus retrograde
calls for some amount
of adjustment or
balancing between the
material and spiritual
aspects of our lives:*

When we are cruising along on the same old path (direct motion), we naturally tend to focus on what we're expecting and ignore anything that is off the prescribed path. But when we are forced to slow down and navigate a detour (retrograde loop), this should cause us to pay more attention. Subsequently, we have more opportunity to notice things off of the normal path that we wouldn't otherwise notice. The question becomes: Do we choose to view this process of change in perspective as an unwelcome intrusion to our routine and, as a result, ignore the gift of perspective in a rush to get back to "normal"? Or do we choose to see it as an opportunity to gain multiple points of view and more information about where we've been and where we're going? It seems that the more productive view is to embrace a chance to see something from multiple perspectives. Even if changes arise that are at first unwelcome, over time and with greater perspective more choices also arise and come into

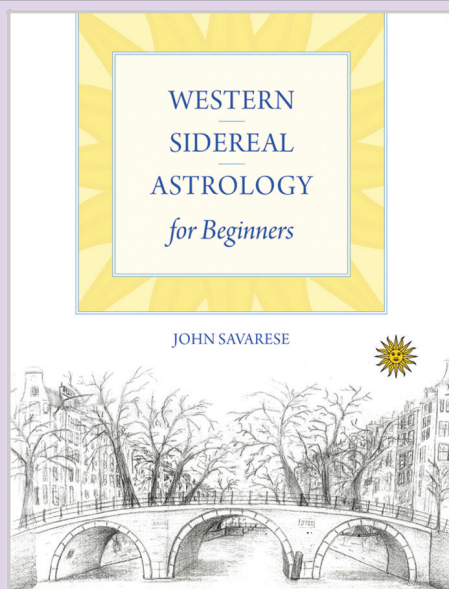
focus; hopefully, this can ultimately enable a necessary adjustment and much better decision-making going forward.

In the 2017 loop, Venus makes significant latitudinal shifts on both sides of the retrograde, but in opposite directions. My new theory would thus expect to see much different experiences on either side of the inferior conjunction (which occurs in the middle of the retrograde). But what might these differences look or feel like? The shift in latitudinal direction from north to south that the upcoming inferior conjunction represents in this particular retrograde loop is perhaps further reinforced by the fact that, from a heliocentric point of view, Venus is also making its closest pass by the Earth. This signals a change in direction from the heliocentric perspective as well.

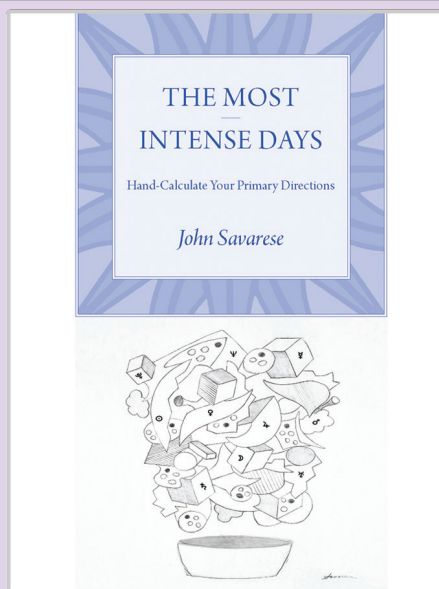
Before the inferior conjunction, Venus is getting closer to Earth and, afterward, begins to move away. Perhaps this is why Robert Blaschke saw the conjunctions of the inner planets with the Sun as "reversals of polarity" or "mutations of energy." Blaschke considered the two kinds of Venusian conjunctions (inferior/retrograde and superior/direct)¹¹ to represent shifts between the two fishes of Pisces, one swimming toward spirit and the other toward matter. He said that with the "oriental phase angle, the spiritual world has a stronger allure."¹² I assume this is because, after the inferior conjunction, Venus is moving out away from Earth, so Venus is moving away from matter (Earth) and toward spirit (Sun).

A Deeper Look at the Stellar Background

This analogy of Venus synodic phases with the two fishes of Pisces brings up a very interesting point with respect to the current loop. Although most of the retrograde is happening in the tropical sign of Aries, as we can see in Diagram 4, it is also happening against the backdrop of stars within the constellation of Pisces. This of course is due to the phenomenon of precession. The tropical zodiac is based on the seasons of the Earth, and because of a slight wobble in our rotational axis, the stars that coincide with the Spring crossing of the



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vernal point shift backward at the rate of about one degree every 72 years. So, with the stars of Pisces currently at the vernal point on the first day of Spring, we are said to be in the “Age of Pisces.”

Arielle Guttman suggests that, though Pisces may be inherently somewhat more comfortable with the spiritual quest, our goal as individuals should be to have both fishes healthy, energetic, in touch with their process, and swimming along together like a pair of dolphins.¹³ Individually, we may thus find that this Venus retrograde calls for some amount of adjustment or balancing between the material and spiritual aspects of our lives. However, on a mundane level (*mundos* meaning “world” in Latin), when examining the constellation of Pisces as a cultural image or symbol, I think it is important and revealing to note that the two fishes of Pisces are bound together with a cord, while swimming at cross purposes. (See **Image**, p. 6.)

Robert Hand observes that, at some time prior to Ptolemy, Pisces was a single fish. Having evolved during a seminal period of Western civilization, the image of two fishes, bound together and swimming at cross purposes, must then say something important about the particular evolution of consciousness that is represented by Western culture. We created this particular image of Pisces, but now it is constantly recreating us via unconscious cultural programming.¹⁴ Another way

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of our society.*

of saying this might be that we are collectively hypnotized or perhaps even possessed by the cultural complex this image represents. And because the individual stars of Pisces are relatively dim, I think this means that our awareness of being so hypnotized will be relatively subtle (that is, the image is hard to see, in both a literal and a figurative sense). However, since we have demonstrated that planets in these retrograde loops have many more points of view available to them, it could be that during the retrograde we actually have a chance to awaken to and perhaps even briefly escape this cultural prison.

Hand further outlines several features of what I’ll call the Pisces Syndrome. First and foremost is the idea of history as a linear progression with a definite and final end or Judgment Day. Rather than an eternal cycle of creation/destruction that echoes the natural seasonal changes of the Earth, the Pisces complex is defined by the idea of some final and decisive battle between the forces of good and evil. It is extremely ironic that, after adopting the cultural idea that a single end to the world is possible, we humans have gone on to actually create that very possibility. Whether by nuclear destruction or mass extinction due to climate change, our judgment day constantly looms at the edges of our awareness as a physical reality for the first time in the history of our species.

This narrow linear view of the world I attribute to the cord that binds the two fishes together in the image. Though the constellation is relatively large in terms of the distance it spans, there is relatively little interior space within the outline of the figure. Metaphorically, as long as people stay on the culturally prescribed path, then they may expect to receive both their cultural and heavenly rewards. However, any deviation from the path is seen as heresy and will have the opposite result: complete destruction. And unfortunately, this intolerance is as present now as it ever was earlier in the Age of Pisces. For instance, scientism now condemns astrology as completely as the Church originally did.

The second major feature of the Pisces complex is that good and evil are no longer relative, but absolute. Here we see, starting with early Christianity, the idea that the physical world is inherently sinful, and this has led us to treat the Earth as though it is less than sacred, a mere inanimate object to be used and discarded. This attitude extends to women, minorities, and “third world” countries. Anything that is not mainstream or part of the hegemony becomes contemptible and is overtly treated as such.

This extreme polarity between good and evil is of course represented by the two fishes themselves. As the stars on the vernal point shifted from the northern fish swimming upward (spiritual) to the fish swimming along the ecliptic (material plane), the culture began to shift its views of what is good from Christianity (and Islam) to scientism. On the whole the materialist mechanistic view has now taken primacy over the spiritual, but the inherent polarity is still the same. Profit has become God, and the elites are no longer located in castles and churches but in legislatures and corporations. The linear goal of this fish is toward modernistic “progress,” rather than a spiritual heaven, but whatever runs counter to the goal (e.g., taxes, regulations) is still considered just as evil.

This drastic split between the forces of light and dark in the cultural consciousness is echoed by a psychic split in the individual, and results in tremendous tension between the revealed and the concealed self. Jung defined the “persona” as the set of traits we consciously develop to meet the demands and expectations of society in order to satisfy our own social aims and aspirations. The “shadow” is the concealed, unconscious counterpart to the persona, and contains personal characteristics of which we are ignorant, afraid, or ashamed. Just as planets run counter to the “normal” direction during retrograde motion, the shadow contains all features of our nature that run counter to the customs and moral conventions of our society.¹⁵

When we try to exclusively identify with the persona and repress the shadow, this eventually results in uncontrollable psychic eruptions where the shadow takes over. The longer and harder we try to deny and repress the unconventional shadow material, the more grotesque an appearance it must assume in order to garner our attention. On this note, I find it extremely interesting that the periodic rise of monstrous cultural figures is actually echoed in the mythology associated both with the constellation Pisces and with the surrounding constellations.

In mythology, the fishes of Pisces are the Ichthyos, who are depicted bringing Aphrodite (Venus) ashore after her birth from the sea foam. They also either rescued Aphrodite and Eros or their forms were assumed as disguises by the two gods in their flight from the monster Typhon. The two were tied together in order to keep from being separated. Since Eros is often connected to sexual passion and the more possessive aspects of love, we can see the knotted cord here as representative of the strong attachments that accompany intimacy and can also often result in violence (such as the Trojan War, fought over possession of Helen).

When, like Manilius (in the opening epigraph), we take in a larger view of the part of the sky in which this Venus retrograde loop occurs, we see that just below Pisces is Cetus, the whale or sea-monster, and just above Pisces is Pegasus, the flying horse. (See **Diagram 5**, below.) These two constellations are just part of an even larger mythic complex involving

Cepheus, Cassiopeia, Andromeda, and Perseus, whose constellations are also found in this general part of the sky. In this tale, Cetus was a sea-monster sent by Poseidon to ravage the land of Ethiopia as punishment for Queen Cassiopeia's hubris. King Cepheus preached independence from the gods, which led to the Queen's boast that she and her daughter Andromeda were more beautiful than the Nereides (sea-nymphs). The Oracle of Ammon prophesied that the monster's appetite could only be satiated if Cepheus and Cassiopeia offered their daughter as a sacrifice, so Andromeda was chained to a rock by the sea. After Perseus slew Medusa, Pegasus was released, and Perseus rode the winged horse to Andromeda's rescue. Perseus used the severed head of Medusa to turn Cetus to stone and save the day.

From these two myths, we can see that the two main sources of monstrous shadow energy are inappropriate or excessive attachments (especially those with any kind of erotic charge) and hubris or excessive pride. It may be that we are tempted, during the first part of the retrograde loop, toward thinking we might "get away with" some unusual or unconventional expression of either or both of these energies, as Venus is ascending in latitude. But during the second part of the retrograde loop, when Venus is descending in latitude, we may then find that the consequences of hubris or excessive attachments have finally caught up to us.

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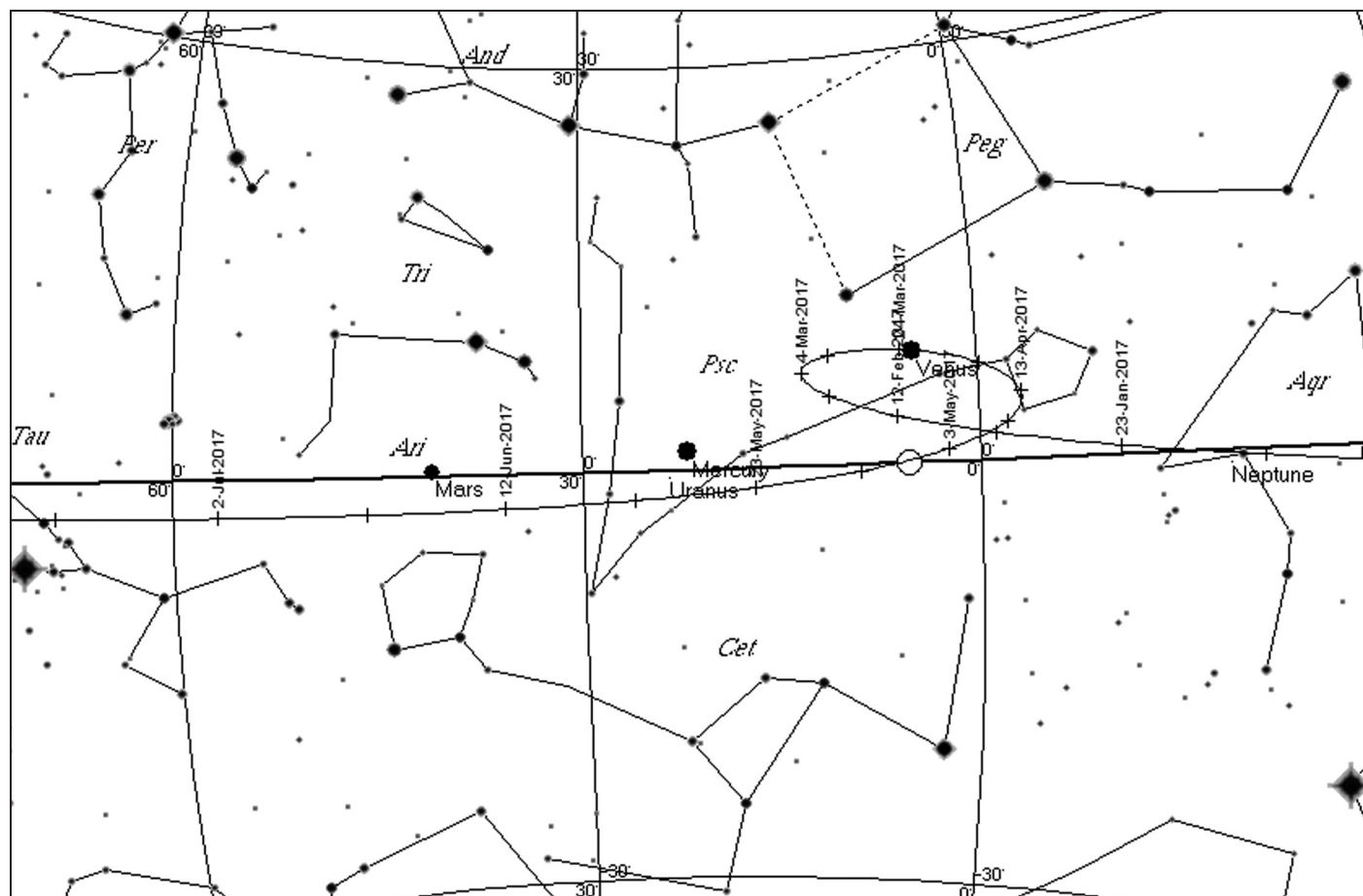


Diagram 5: Constellations near the 2017 Venus retrograde loop

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In summary, I believe that it is not only possible but advisable to use an understanding of all three astrological factors we've covered in this article in order to successfully navigate this Venus retrograde. To accomplish this, we should strive to cultivate a simultaneous awareness of (1) the tropical sign of Aries, (2) Venus's place in the northern latitude loop, and (3) the cultural scripts arising from the image of the constellation Pisces. Therefore, the most productive path may entail our being cautious of forging ahead impulsively or recklessly before we have enough information (negative Aries), and instead taking our time to watch for and let go of our attachments to elements of the Pisces syndrome as they arise in our lives. Also, instead of staying on the narrow prescribed path of the knotted cord (our usual routines, customs, and beliefs), perhaps at some point we can use the gift of perspective that the retrograde loop offers to help us embrace something "off the beaten path" in a way that actually brings balance between the spiritual and material aspects of our lives.

Most important of all, instead of becoming reactive or combative when something offends us, perhaps we can use the true spiritual energy of Pisces to practice and model tolerance, acceptance, and loving-kindness toward people/places/things our culture might normally polarize against and see as bad or unacceptable. Ultimately, this Venus retrograde presents an opportunity for recognizing, calling out, and offering alternatives to the hypnotic storylines of the cultural mythos that defines our Piscean Age. Courageously answering this call for re-scripting, while still maintaining a loving center, seems to represent the healthy, vivifying, and liberating path through this upcoming loop-de-loop experience.

References and Notes

(All URLs were accessed in January 2017.)

1. Marcus Manilius, *Astronomica*, "Book Five," Harvard University Press, 1977.
2. I've done much more extensive demonstrations of these loops in our recent webinar series. For more information about recordings of past events as well as upcoming webinars and live events, check us out at <http://www.SkyAstrologyConference.com>
3. I first learned of these loops from my Sky Astrology Conference collaborator Adam Gainsburg. After I personally studied them in relation to Venus and noticed that they morph over long periods of time, Lee Lehman introduced me to a book wherein the German astrologer Hinze had laboriously catalogued the Mars loops in an appendix. Upon having the appendix translated by my publisher, Jenn Zahrt, I realized that the prototype loop shapes that Hinze had laid out for Mars could be adjusted for the other planets, each according to its own nodal axis. See Oscar Marcel Hinze, *Tantra Vidya: Science of Tantra*, Theseus Verlag, 1976.
4. From the point of view of the Sun (heliocentric), these nodes are much more stable and vary only slightly over long periods of time — that is, they change at a rate slower than precession. For delineation, see Mark Jones's excellent piece on planetary nodes in the Dec. 2013/Jan. 2014 issue of *The Mountain Astrologer*.
5. Arielle Guttman, *Venus Star Rising: A New Cosmology for the Twenty-First Century*, Sophia Venus Productions, 2010.
6. Astronomical transits of Venus occur when the planet Venus visibly crosses the disk of the Sun, such as in June 2004 and 2012. The next pair of transits are not due until December 2117 and 2125. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transit_of_Venus
7. Readers who do not have software capable of calculating a planet's latitude can easily look it up online at <http://ephemeris.com/ephemeris.php/>. Readers are cautioned not to confuse **latitude**, the north/south measurement along the *ecliptic*, with **declination**, the north/south measurement along the *celestial equator*.
8. <http://www.politico.com/story/2009/01/obama-to-gop-i-won-017862>
9. <http://www.outpost-of-freedom.com/mcveigh/okcwhy.htm>
10. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hainan_Island_incident
11. The "inferior" conjunction is the conjunction made when Mercury or Venus passes between the Sun and the Earth, during retrograde motion. The Latin *inferius*, meaning "below" or "lower," refers to the fact that the planet is at its closest approach to Earth at this time. The "superior" conjunction is made when the planet passes on the far side of the Sun from Earth, during direct motion. The Latin *superius*, meaning "above" or "higher," refers to the fact that the planet is at its farthest distance from Earth at this time.
12. Robert P. Blaschke, *Astrology: A Language of Life*, Vol. V – *Holographic Transits*, Earthwalk School of Astrology, 2006, p. 101. By "oriental phase angle" Blaschke means the part of Venus's cycle with the Sun (aka *synodic cycle*) where she is in an earlier degree of the zodiac, and therefore rises before the Sun at dawn across the oriental or eastern angle of a horoscope (the Ascendant) in terms of the daily or diurnal motion made by all the planets (the once daily motion of rising on the Ascendant, culminating at the Midheaven, and setting at the Descendant). This oriental or "morning star" phase lasts from the retrograde or inferior conjunction until the direct or superior conjunction, which is about nine months.
13. Ariel Guttman and Kenneth Johnson, *Mythic Astrology*, Llewellyn, 1993, pp. 359–360.
14. Robert Hand, "The Age and Constellation of Pisces," in *Essays on Astrology*, Para Research, 1982.
15. Murray Stein, *Jung's Map of the Soul*, Open Court Publishing, 1998, ch. 5, "The Revealed and Concealed in Relations with Others," pp. 103–124.

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A contributor to TMA, as well as many other astrology journals and conferences, **Gary P. Caton** has been a practicing astrologer for two Jupiter cycles now. Gary is a co-founder of the Sky Astrology Conference, a recurring innovative, experiential gathering of astrologers to renew ancient visual and cyclic traditions. He is looking forward to witnessing the brightest apparition of Mars since 2003 at the next Sky Astrology Conference, to be held August 9–12, 2018 in Moffat, Colorado. Find out more about this event and the ongoing popular SAC webinar series by visiting <http://www.skyastrologyconference.com>; contact Gary personally via e-mail: gary@dreamastrologer.com

