

Venus Retrograde and the Midterm Elections

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Midterm Elections

Terms of elective office to the U.S. Congress are two years for the House of Representatives and six years for the Senate. Thus, every two years, the entire House (currently mandated by law at 435 seats) is up for election, along with one-third of the Senate (usually 35 seats out of 100). Civics 101.

The upside to this scheme — theoretically, at least — is that the brief two-year terms in the House prevent political hardening of legislative arteries, allowing for frequent turnover in the makeup of Congress. Historically, though, incumbents have a pronounced advantage in elections. Despite the low public opinion of Congress overall, voters tend to approve of Representatives from their home states. Go figure. The downside to short terms is that House members spend a disproportionate amount of their time (more than half) fund-raising and campaigning for re-election rather than actually doing the work of governing for which they were elected.

Midterm elections occur every four years at the midpoint of presidential terms. Typically, a pendulum swing occurs: The political party in power usually suffers losses in midterm elections, sometimes enough to change majorities in the House or Senate from Republican to Democrat or vice versa. That alternating rhythm in voter sentiment favors centrism in our political duopoly and tends to prevent one party from establishing an ongoing dynasty. Reversals of Congressional majorities also provide a check on the power of the Executive branch by hamstringing the President.

Enter Venus Retrograde

Viewed from the earth (which is the perspective from which geocentric astrology makes astronomical calculations), Venus exhibits retrograde motion — apparently moving backwards due to the parallax factor between the orbits around the Sun of the earth and Venus — approximately every a year and a half. On average, each retrograde period of Venus is 41-42 days long, with Venus backing up in the zodiac by about 16°, or roughly half a sign.

Unlike the outer planets, which spend almost half their time in retrogradation, the inner planets (Mercury, Venus, and Mars) have distinct and more limited

retrogrades. In our real-life experience, Venus' retrograde loop is much less obvious than Mars retrogrades or the more frequent Mercury retrogrades. Venus retro is more subtle and tends to operate not in the spotlight, but more under the surface or between the lines.

Planetary retrogradation is typically interpreted in astrology as a time of greater unconsciousness, as if the principles of the planet involved had retreated temporarily to a more primal, instinctive, or less rational level of our psyches. The symbolic implication is a kind of evolutionary recapitulation. Forward movement in astrology is linked with conscious expression of our urges (although the term "conscious" here is obviously relative), with backward motion assumed to represent a temporary reversal.

Astrologers are well aware that planets do not actually slow down, stop, and reverse direction in their orbits around the Sun. We understand parallax. Unlike science, however, astrology is a system of poetic metaphor: *As above, So below*. Astrology presumes that our observations of the heavens — especially the solar system — is in some way relevant to our experience of life on earth. How that works remains mysterious, but astrology is concerned with the analogy, not the mechanism. The idea of planetary retrogradation implying a reversal from the conscious into the subconscious may seem simplistic to many people, but, from my perspective, that interpretation applies very clearly to our current situation in America. More about that momentarily.

Venus retrograde is considered a period where personal values are up for reassessment — who we love, what we like, whatever's important to us that we hold dear. That includes cultural values and even politics. This year, Venus went retrograde on 5 October 2018 at 10 Scorpio 50 and will station direct on 16 November 2018 at 25 Libra 15.

Venus' retrogradation repeats quite precisely every five retrograde loops, a period of about eight years. For example, on 15 May 2012, Venus made its retrograde station at 24 Gemini 00. Eight years earlier, Venus went retrograde on 17 May 2004 at 26 Gemini 08. This is the characteristic pattern: 2° of zodiacal arc earlier and two days of calendar time later in a slow precession that takes almost a millennia to complete one rotation through the zodiac.

That eight-year repeating cycle turns out to be significant in at least one correspondence. Every eight years over the past century, the national midterm elections in America have been held during a Venus retrograde. Below is a list of the dates of those midterm elections and the zodiacal position of Venus in its retrograde motion on the day of the voting:

Election	Venus Rx
7 Nov 1922	9 Sagittarius 39
4 Nov 1930	7 Sagittarius 15
8 Nov 1938	3 Sagittarius 18
5 Nov 1946 ...	1 Sagittarius 02
2 Nov 1954	28 Scorpio 46

6 Nov 1962	23 Scorpio	32
3 Nov 1970	21 Scorpio	23
7 Nov 1978	15 Scorpio	14
4 Nov 1986	13 Scorpio	08
8 Nov 1994	6 Scorpio	56
5 Nov 2002	4 Scorpio	49
2 Nov 2010	2 Scorpio	44
6 Nov 2018	27 Libra	10
3 Nov 2026	25 Libra	01

No doubt certain astrologers are aware of this correspondence between Congressional midterm elections and Venus retrograde. I doubt that many are, however, because it's not the kind of correlation most astrologers look for, and little has been written about it. (I couldn't find a single article online about this astrological pattern.) I noticed it while researching this commentary.

I didn't go back further than 1922 for two reasons. First, women didn't get suffrage (the right to vote) until 1920. Second, until 1914, Senators weren't elected by popular vote of their constituents. Before ratification of the 17th Amendment to the Constitution, Senators were appointed by each state, usually by the state legislature. The 14 midterm elections listed above, all of which occurred during Venus retrograde, don't contain any simple or obvious Ah-Ha! type revelations. No smoking gun. What I'll offer instead is just the basic astrological symbolism in the way I see it.

The first four midterm elections on the list — 1922, 1930, 1938, and 1946 — happened with Venus retrograding through the sign Sagittarius. That invokes the Sagittarian principles of idealism and collective spirit.

The next eight elections in the list — 1954, 1962, 1970, 1978, 1986, 1994, 2002, and 2010 — were all held with Venus retrograde in Scorpio. Symbolically, this brings up concerns about economics, money, and power — the meme of *"It's the economy, Stupid!"*

What's interesting to me about this 2018 midterm election is that it's the first in the evolving eight-year pattern that will occur with Venus retrograde in Libra. That moves the symbolism away from economics or money and toward social concerns about harmony, equality, and justice. Since Venus is retrograde in late Libra on election day, those qualities in the collective can be thought of as having receded into the primal unconscious.

I think a strong case can be made that our tribal polarity is as entrenched and intransigent at this point as at any previous time in American history. Significant numbers of the population completely reject anyone who does not share their cultural and political views. In this Us-Them dynamic that is programmed so deeply into human nature, a mild expression is generosity toward Us and neutral indifference toward Them — concern for Us, but no feeling at all for Them. A more extreme manifestation of Us-Them is warm love for those we consider Us, but cold hatred toward those we consider Them. Taken to the limit, that hatred

can become murderous. "They" are seen as inhuman or evil and should be exterminated. Some particularly sick Americans embrace that view right now, with many others not too far from it.

Hatred doesn't seem to me an exaggeration of our current condition. Abhorrence of the Other no longer simmers just below the surface. Scorn, contempt, and animosity have again boiled over in the archetype field or zeitgeist of our culture. I feel it in my own life, and I see it manifested everywhere in America. The European colonization of the western hemisphere began a long cycle of brutality, and American history is particularly violent. As a nation, the possibility that we are descending into madness, like the dragon eating its own tail, no longer seems far-fetched.

Given the events of this past week, with three more episodes of public violence — multiple pipe bombs mailed to many well-known persons villified by President Trump and the far right, plus the shooting murders of two African-Americans in a grocery store near Louisville and eleven Jewish congregants in a synagogue in Pittsburgh — more appeals are being heard for a return to "civility." These pleas are particularly disingenuous from politicians, who speak of "cooperation" and "unity," then in the next breath lambast the other side. The hypocrisy is overwhelming. While I am all for an end to violence at every level, I'm certain that even sincere appeals for a return to mutual respect and personal restraint will fall on deaf ears and serve only to further enrage those who already lean toward vehemence. America is nowhere close to any reunion or peaceful reconciliation of public sentiment. Trump has invited the violent fringe into the mainstream and continues to stoke the fires of hatred.

Venus retrograde isn't typically associated with an obvious or marked increase in mayhem, but I'm not surprised that savagery is commanding the headlines now.

From my perspective, the function of this Venus retrograde is to bring home to our awareness just how polarized, divided, and disturbed America really is. That has been apparent since the 2016 Presidential election, but the full realization of our dilemma as a nation and a people has not yet fully sunk in. Venus is showing us where we truly are.

What is needed is not a return to superficially polite discourse. That would be like putting a band-aid on a gunshot wound. We require a new and altogether original sense of shared life in the collective that is not merely unrealized thus far, but currently unimaginable. Achieving that — if we can, which is far from certain and probably doubtful — will take infinitely more than just a single political election.