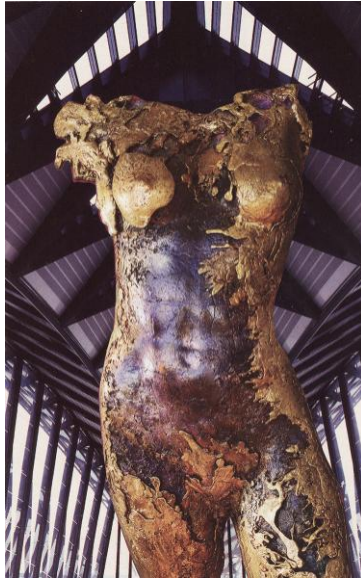


LOVE AND MONEY

Fables and Foibles of Venus Retrogrades



Goddesses can be fickle; never more so than when venerable Venus goes down the slippery slope of her bi-annual retrograde and all things in her domain seem also to be moving backwards. Retrogrades can be revelatory. As the dual ruler of both Taurus (the material world) and Libra (relationships) Venus has dominion over both love and money. The Goddess' retrograde is a time to hold tight to your wallet—and to your significant other. Even more significantly, it is a time to re-evaluate what it is that we truly value in our hearts. Retrogrades are times for inner reflection. We are transitioning into a new heart-centered paradigm—love is the ultimate province of Venus.

Staying Power

While inner planets generally pass quickly through the zodiac, retrograde periods give them more time in a sign, translating into greater influence on the collective. And then, once in a century or so, a rare event of universal impact occurs which elevates a particular planet into a position of prominence and triggers very long range implications. And so it is for Venus in 2012 as she turns retrograde at 23° Gemini on May 15th and then on June 5th makes the final pass of a pair of dramatic solar transits that won't be seen again until December 11th 2117.

This “transit or occultation of Venus” is a replay of the spectacular performance Venus delivered in 2004, when during her retrograde period, (May 17th – June 28th) she passed over the face of the Sun (June 8th). This year, once again beating a retreat through Gemini, sign of the twins, the undisputed

rulers of duality and Venus' esoteric ruler, she mounts her second challenge to old SOL. This year's transit was visible before sundown over most of North America.

Hindsight

Looking back at events in 2004, as well as during the ensuing eight years, we can gain some perspective on our current Venesian challenges and opportunities. The 2004 transit seeded many of the issues that have dominated the intervening years, and hold (at least) the promise of transformation following the second event in 2012. We can hope for some dramatic shifts, but may have to wait decades (or even centuries) for the report card as we are talking about the birth of long term evolutionary trends.

Venus transits of the last thousand years have all occurred on the axis of Gemini and Sagittarius. These two signs, representing opposite poles of thinking, embody our ideas, opinions and beliefs, our cosmology and understanding of universal truths. Our worldview has expanded and transformed following each transit. In 1518, for example, Magellan circumnavigated the globe and proved that the world was round! During this period the Reformation began in Western Europe and the age of female rulers came to Europe. Mary Queen of Scots; Queen Elizabeth I and Catherine de Medici all ruled in the 1550's following that occultation. The Suffragette movement emerged as a force during the last Venus transits in 1874 and 1882. Perhaps following the 2012 occultation Americans can finally pass the Equal Rights Amendment!

Marriage Rites—and Rights...and Wrongs

In the eight years since 2004 certain Venesian issues have been prominent in the news—primarily culture wars involving women's issues, marriage and family values and economic instability exacerbating gross inequalities in our society and forcing many of us to simplify our lifestyles and redefine our personal values. For review: May 17th, 2004 was a big day for the Goddess of Love and Marriage. As she stationed retrograde, *the first legal same sex marriages in the country were performed in Massachusetts*, in accordance with an edict by that state's Supreme Court. Gays rushed to the altar—well, mostly to the courthouse steps--to take their vows. Many heterosexual couples were not so fortunate. In heavily Catholic Boston, it proved easier to find a Justice of the Peace than a Priest to officiate at a marriage ceremony. Time Magazine (May 17, "Going to the Chapel?") reported that 175 Boston parishes had been "fingering" for closure due to the church's fiscal crisis (remember the sex scandals?), greatly restricting the availability of summer wedding bookings and leaving many altars abandoned without brides.

State-by-state battles over same sex marriage are still being waged. Back in the '90s President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act; its constitutionality is now being questioned and thus far attempts to amend the US Constitution to ban same sex marriage have failed. Most importantly, public opinion has shifted to be strongly in favor of same sex unions. Meanwhile statistics show that among heterosexuals, marriage is on the decline. A series of articles in The Nation (July 5 2004) "Can Marriage be Saved?" reviewed the history of marriage as a religious, cultural and legal institution. Writers

concluded that the same sex marriage debate is part and parcel of the larger question of the separation of church and state. 2004 was an election year and politicians were clearly using this wedge issue to woo voters. Another repetition in 2012!

The War on Women

The largest Venusian battleground issue to surface in recent years is clearly the “War on Women”. Under attack are women’s health care and reproductive rights. Many of us thought that access to birth control had been pretty much de facto since the 1970s. Apparently not in 2012. Those forces dedicated to preserving their power in the patriarchal model know that the way to empower women is to give them choices in family planning—and conversely the easiest way to disempower them is to keep them pregnant—if not barefoot. Restricting women’s earning ability and financial freedom is another weapon. During 2004, women employees won a bid to sue Wal-Mart for millions in back pay, due to wage discrimination. This ruling was recently reversed by the Supreme Court. Pay inequality continues to depress women’s economic health. Venus will need to muster a lot of muscle this year to protect and defend her territory. In her earliest incarnation as Innana, Venus was a war goddess. May she draw upon her history!

Woman Warrior of the Year

Venus may have a new champion here on Earth in the person of Melinda Gates. A recent article in Newsweek (May 14, 2012) revealed that she is marshalling forces (and money) into an advocacy of global family planning services. Decades ago, our government was extremely active in the arena of population control. However, the rationale for support of such programs was political, motivated by an anti-communist agenda to lift third world countries out of poverty in order to assure that they would not fall prey to the great red menace. The end of the cold war saw these programs stripped of funding. The rise of the religious right in America, with Republican politicians pandering to its new base, has completely gutted family planning services both abroad and in this country. Abortion and contraception aren’t the only targets of this campaign; the wider unspoken target of misogynistic attacks is female sexuality. Melinda Gates is a feminist standard bearer, committed to social welfare. She recognizes the vital role that liberating women from unwanted pregnancies (as well as making educational opportunities available to them) has in transforming societies around the world. She is funding research in the area of contraception in the hope of developing an implantable device that can be turned on and off at will by the woman in whose body it resides.

The Love of Money

Venus is the original “material girl”, having a double rulership over both Libra (love) and Taurus (money). During her biennial retrograde the maxim “caveat emptor” (let the buyer beware) is sorely tested. Purchases made in these times rarely hold their value or live up to initial expectations. Just ask the millions of homeowners who bought during the 2004 “high” and are now under water on their mortgages. During the 2004 retrograde Venus opposed Pluto, Lord of the Underworld and concealer of

dark intentions, many of which have come to light in the eight year period since. The stakes were very high, as the collapse of the housing bubble, the banking industry, and the world economy attest to. Unregulated greed was the culprit. As we are counseled: “The love of money is the root of all evil”.

Denial also played a large part in the mortgage debacle. Back in 2004, several independent agencies, including the Mortgage Bankers Association, the Federal Reserve Bank of NY and the Center for Economic Policy Research released studies on the *so-called* “housing bubble”. None of the reports could agree on the existence of a bubble, let alone whether or not it would burst. The only common ground was the shared assumption that since real estate costs vary by location, some areas are more bubble prone than others. Shaky ground, at best.

Money, Politics & Power

President Reagan died during the 2004 Venus retrograde (see my article “Farewell to the Fortieth” <http://www.stariq.com/Main/Articles/P0005511.HTM>) closing the book on one of America's great love affairs. Nancy Reagan, clearly Venus' handmaiden on Earth (remember, she had an astrologer in the White House), planned one of the most beautifully orchestrated state funerals in history. The greatest legacy of the Reagan presidency, for which he was duly eulogized, was ending the Cold War. He actually accomplished this by *out-spending* the Russians in the area of national defense. Fans gobbled up Reaganalia on eBay, where a tin button from the presidential campaign he lost (!) in 1976 fetched \$125. Worth mentioning here in hindsight, is that while Reagan continues to be revered as the model for Republican presidents (and hopefuls) to emulate, should he come back today he would not recognize his party—and he also couldn't get elected! Values (Venus) have changed.

In June of 2004, Michael Moore released *Fahrenheit 911*, billed as an expose of money and power in American politics. It grossed \$23.9 million in the first weekend and within seven weeks the box office take climbed to \$113 million. No documentary in history had ever been so profitable. The subject matter nonetheless accurately reflected the planetary themes. At the time, Venus opposed Pluto (the plutocracy) and the transiting nodes of the moon, harbingers of our collective destiny, were in value conscious Taurus (Venus ruled) and transformational Scorpio (Pluto ruled). However, no one in 2004 could have predicted the 2010 Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United that insures the plutocracy control over American election financing.

Jockeying for money and power is the tip of a much larger iceberg—entrenched beliefs in scarcity and separation, dualistic thinking (us and them) and a warped worldview. These beliefs (the Gemini/Sag axis) are the real illusions. Gemini rules *duality*. We have seen unprecedented partisanship in politics which has effectively paralyzed the engine of American government. And, let us not forget the branding of the *Two Americas*, that of the privileged 1% and the rest of us. Our current attitudes and actions are the “flat Earth” thinking of the 21st century. We are being urged to transform our core values. The promise of the Great Shift is a leveling of the field, the creation of an egalitarian, inclusive society. Aquarius, the New Age which we are entering is, after all, a model for utopian values.

Earth in the Balance

During the Bush years environmental protections were gutted-- the endangered species act, as well as legislation to protect clean air and water. Billions of dollars paid by lobbyists and climate deniers bought off scientists and politicians. Emission standards on coal fired plants were lowered. Whole mountaintops were removed, the debris choking streams and valleys. Gas exploration and mining permits are still being issued on public lands adjacent to National Parks. Taurus (Venus ruled) is about being good stewards of the Earth, preserving the sanctity of the living Earth with sustainable practices. Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, released in 2006, was a hopeful sign in a fight that can only be won by a mass awakening of public consciousness. Earth is naturally abundant and there is more than enough for all to share.

The Weight of a Nation

"Confronting America's Obesity Epidemic" is the subtitle to this 4 part HBO documentary airing on May 14-15th 2012. In a scathing renunciation of this so-called-new approach to making fat people healthy and thin, titled "The New Obesity Campaigns Have it All Wrong, (Newsweek May 14th) author Gary Taubs reveals that the new "science" the public is being fed is really the same old discredited "eat less calories, exercise more" theory that hasn't ever worked in the past. The real culprits, he posits, are sugar and refined carbohydrates. What does this have to do with Venus? Well, Libra, which rules 'balance' also rules 'imbalance' and specifically sugar imbalances and diabetes—another American epidemic. I recently saw a slogan on a bumper sticker that was for sale at a local health food store—"Sugar, the gateway drug". Americans are addicted to sugar! And, for decades the USDA enshrined refined grains as heart healthy foods on the base of the infamous Food Guide Pyramid. Will the public ever be told the truth (Sagittarius)? Not as long as the government is beholden to lobbyists from the food processing industries to whom sugar is their stock and trade. Substituting artificial sweeteners, even disregarding the potentially harmful side effects of chemicals, are not the solution, as they also trigger the hormone insulin which regulates fat accumulation. It's not just fast food, but junk food—all cheap carbs—in our diets that are responsible for all manner of life threatening health problems. Of course, there is a larger issue, that of hunger in America. Statistics on "food insecure" households, estimated at nearly 15%, have skyrocketed in recent years.

Oh, Venus!

Venus is always retrograde during her solar transit. Just after turning retrograde she characteristically disappears from the night sky. In myth, this invisible period is considered her time of journeying to the underworld, the domain of Hades or Pluto. A Venus retrograde is a time for re-evaluation of our priorities, values and relationships. After a sojourn of several weeks in the dark, Venus emerges again—this time as the morning, not the evening star. A hopeful "sign" of a new dawn ahead.

As Venus visibly transits across the surface of the Sun—she symbolizes the divine feminine principal challenging the patriarchal culture. This gal has chutzpah! However, to paraphrase a popular advertising

slogan, 'You have a long way to go, baby'. Feminist agendas have long been undervalued. Photos of the 2004 transit show the relative size of Venus (a tiny dot) compared to the Sun, providing a graphic illustration of the small sphere of influence (pun intended) of Venusian, "yin" values against the backdrop of our dominant "yang" culture. Size matters! Metaphorically, one can appreciate the enormity of the task ahead to balance these polarities. However, balance can be achieved through a change of perspective. Hypothetically, if we were as close to Venus as we are to the Moon a Venus solar eclipse would be possible. By this metaphorical yardstick, our assignment is to move closer to Venus—symbolically of course—to embrace and empower the influence of the 'Goddess of Love and Beauty' on Earth.

"Love and Light"

Many of my friends and family reported feeling exceptionally good, e.g. happy, uplifted, optimistic about the future, "light-hearted", if you will, on June 8th, 2004— whether they were consciously aware of the transit or not. The influx of "good vibrations" onto planet Earth was discernible. A Sun/Venus conjunction conjoins the love planet and the source of light for our solar system. Light is often understood as "enlightenment" or wisdom. Therefore, a Sun/Venus conjunction can be a powerful metaphor for the marriage of "Love and Light". "Love and Light" is the "New Age" mantra.

"We are here to make a better world."

Abbe Hoffman

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