

At a predictable point in its orbit around the Sun every planet appears to slow down, turn around and move backwards against the backdrop of the zodiacal belt. What could this portend? Well it is a time to reflect over the past cycle and challenge the assumptions you have accepted without question. In the following article we look at some remedies for retro-periods, especially when the inner planets Mercury, Venus and Mars decide to backtrack it for a while. This article originally appeared in the 2004 Wellspring AstroLog-
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☾: Retrograde Remedies

by Brian Clark

TIME TO REFLECT

Imagine being in the driver's seat of your car. You are at a stoplight on the crest of a hill. Another car is also stopped directly beside you. Your foot is firmly on the brake to avoid rolling backward. The car beside you now begins to edge forward. What is your reaction? You instinctively press your foot on the brake, as you are experiencing the sensation of moving backward. Your reaction is automatic.

While your car has not moved the sensation of rolling backward is a physiological reality. This is an example of reacting to an 'apparent' movement. The phenomenon of retrograde planets is also due to 'apparent' movement, as planets in reality do not travel backwards. However from our point of view here on earth they appear as if they retrograding against the backdrop of the ecliptic. Why the planets appear to be moving backward through the zodiac is due to the observation of another planet from our planet, Earth, which is also moving around the Sun. The planets, Mercury and Venus, are between the Earth and the Sun. As we perceive them on the background of the zodiac, they appear to go backward when they are closer to the Earth. When Venus and Mercury are on the other side of the Sun they appear direct but as they move between the Earth and the Sun, they appear to retrograde even though they are moving forward. As they begin to travel parallel to the Earth's orbit, they appear to change direction. The planets, Mars to Pluto, are similar. They are retrograde when they are closest to the Earth. As the Earth moves up to conjunct the planet, they will appear to move backward. The best analogy to describe this is to imagine being on a fast moving train, which comes up to a slower moving train. As it begins to be overtaken, the slower moving train appears to be going backward from the perspective of the fast moving train. Every planet goes retrograde in its

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orbital path around the Sun and it is important to be aware what reactions may occur during the period.

Before we look at some possible retrograde reactions and their remedies let's consider the celestial nature of a retrograde planet. *First* each planet retrogrades at a predictable point in its cycle, therefore the retrograde period is a specific aspect of its full cycle. During retrograde periods the planetary energy is apt to be more reflective, focused and internalized in order to integrate what has previously occurred in its cycle.

Secondly retrograde planets are nearer the Earth than at any other time in their orbit. Astrologically this suggests they are closer to the core of the self than when direct. Mercury and Venus, being between the Earth and the Sun, will be approaching a conjunction with the Sun during their retrograde phase. Due to these planets always being in proximity to the Sun from our geocentric point of view they rendezvous close to the Earth when retrograde. This suggests an increased identification with this planetary energy at this point in the cycle. All the other planets outside the Earth's orbit will be opposing the Sun when retrograde. Due to these planets being exterior to the Earth's orbit they have a multiplicity of angular relationships to the Sun. The opposition to the Sun occurring during the retrograde phase suggests the potential to be acutely aware of the planetary energy, as during this period it challenges the conscious sense of identity. In the middle of the retrogradation period the planets beyond the earth's orbit will be exactly opposite the Sun while Mercury and Venus will be exactly conjunct the Sun. Retrograde planets have an important role in shaping personal identity and confidence as well as encouraging the formation of a strong and healthy ego. During the retrograde time their energy is heightened and more in focus. The middle of the retrograde period suggests an important time when the meaning of the retrograde period comes to consciousness.

Finally consider other factors with retrograde planetary cycles such as the length of the retrograde period, the frequency and especially the zodiacal territory they cover when retrograde. Note the dates of their planetary stations and the midpoint of their cycle, as this is the time when the retrograde energy is most apparent. The slower moving planets from Jupiter to Pluto go retrograde every year for a period of 4 to 5 ½ months.

2004 Retrograde Periods: Jupiter – Pluto

Planet	Retrograde Period	Zodiacal Coverage
Jupiter	January 4, 2004 - May 5, 2004	18 ♍54 – 8 ♍55
	<i>Jupiter retrogrades through ♍ (Virgo) for 4 months backtracking 10 degrees of the zodiac. A reversal of fortune!</i>	
Saturn	October 26, 2003 – March 8, 2004	13 ♋14 – 6 ♋17
	<i>Saturn retrogrades through ♋ (Cancer) for 4 ½ months backtracking 7 degrees of the zodiac. Acute awareness of authority, rules, regulations and the law!</i>	
Chiron	May 2, 2004 – September 27, 2004	26 ♐08 – 20 ♐30
	<i>This year Chiron retrogrades through ♐ (Capricorn) for 4 ¾ months backtracking 5 ½ degrees of the zodiac. Old wounds fester to intensify the healing process.</i>	
Uranus	June 11, 2004 – November 12, 2004	6 ♋48 – 2 ♋52
	<i>Uranus retrogrades through ♋ (Pisces) for 5 months backtracking 4 degrees of the zodiac. Restating my individual point of view!</i>	
Neptune	May 17, 2004 – October 24, 2004	15 ♒24 – 12 ♒36
	<i>Neptune retrogrades through ♒ (Aquarius) for 5 ¼ months backtracking 3 degrees of the zodiac. A greater focus on the creative and spiritual self.</i>	
Pluto	March 25, 2004 – August 31, 2004	22 ♏15 – 19 ♏33
	<i>This year Pluto retrogrades through ♏ (Sagittarius) for 5 ¼ months backtracking 3 degrees of the zodiac. Knowing what needs to be reshaped!</i>	

These retrograde energies are often reflected in the global environment especially during their stations when the energetic planetary pulse is shifting. However it is the faster-moving inner planets Mercury, Venus and Mars that are retrograde less frequently and signal important personal shifts.

MERCURY ☿

2004 Retrograde Periods	Stations	Midpoint
April 7 – April 30	April 6 - 8, April 29 – May 1	April 16 - 18
August 10 – September 2	August 9 - 11, September 1 – 3	August 23 - 24
November 30 – December 20	November 29 – December 1, December 19 - 21	December 10 -11

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Mercury has a penchant for 3's: retrograde for 3 weeks 3 times a year. Three times in twelve months for a period of about three weeks Mercury will be retrograde. It also has a six-year pattern of retrograding through the elements. The pattern of Mercury suggests that there are cycles of thinking and rethinking and an order to the expressive, communicative thinking function. The traditional view of this period is that it invariably strains communication lines bringing lost letters, wrong phone numbers, cancelled appointments, misread contracts, computer crashes and a host of frustrating communication delays. This is so often true, but when viewed in the context of a cycle this period contains its own intelligence. Inherent in every planetary cycle is the retrograde phase containing the wisdom to slow down, take your time and reflect on what has happened during the past few months. Also witness Mercury turning retrograde at the approximate degree that it turned direct three periods ago: three again! Trickster Mercury back tracks in his cycle to pick up the loose threads of the pattern which it is weaving. By checking Diagram 1, you can see that Mercury will turn retrograde at 26° 44' on the 30th of November 2004 the zodiacal degree it turned direct three periods ago on 18th December 2003 threading these two periods together. Mercury retrograde alerts us to the times when our thought processes are constantly reshaping previous ground. What may have seemed straightforward will now be questioned.

Periods of Mercury retrograde are important to mark on your calendars as it is time to review, clear the backlog of work, file what needs to be filed, delete old programs from the computer and return the phone calls that you have been avoiding. Now is the time to get caught up with the paper trail that has piled up, to finish the assignment you have been procrastinating over, and to complete the tasks you have been delaying. If we continue to try to instigate new projects during the period when Mercury is retrograde, then we stress the communication system, resulting in the computer crashing, the photocopier packing up or documents disappearing. It is time for revision and completion. During Mercury Retrograde there is a heightened sensitivity to all Mercurial symbols and processes like emails, mobile phones, answering machines, computers; Mercurial industries like the post office, courier services, transport, information technology; Mercurial professions like lecturing, taxi driving, printing etc. It is also time to mend the broken down lines of communication with our Mercurial companions like our siblings, associates and colleagues. Phone a friend and begin to talk about what is important.

DIAGRAM 1: MERCURY RETROGRADE

Year	Date Stationary Retrograde	Zodiacal Degree	Date Stationary Direct	Zodiacal Degree	Retrograde Element	# of days Retrograde
2003	3.01.03	28 ♃ 28	23.01.03	12 ♃ 18	Earth	20
	26.04.03	20 ♉ 33	20.05.03	11 ♉ 08	Earth	24
	28.08.03	26 ♋ 19	20.09.03	12 ♋ 13	Earth	23
	18.12.03	12 ♄ 34	6.01.04	26 ♃ 17	Earth - Fire	20
2004	7.04.04	1 ♉ 56	30.04.04	21 ♈ 08	Fire	24
	10.08.04	8 ♋ 47	2.09.04	25 ♌ 45	Fire	23
	30.11.04	26 ♃ 44	20.12.04	10 ♃ 27	Fire	21
2005	20.03.05	14 ♈ 06	12.04.05	22 ♈ 45	Fire	23
	23.07.05	20 ♌ 28	16.08.05	8 ♌ 45	Fire	24
	14.11.05	13 ♃ 14	4.12.05	24 ♋ 44	Fire-Water	20

Take note of these periods three times a year. Mark in the diary to spend this time reviewing, editing, rethinking and reformulating plans in order to be in sync with Mercury's direction. In 2004 note that Mercury is retrograding through the fire signs stressing the need to reflect on goals, creative projects, beliefs and travel plans. Be alert for technical disruptions and 'power surges' during the third week of August when retrograde Mercury opposes Uranus. During the first week of December Mercury retrograde opposes Pluto bringing hidden agendas and broken contracts out into the open. Remember at the middle of the period Mercury will be conjunct the Sun identifying what needs to be communicated. The difficulties experienced when Mercury is retrograde are helping us recall, review, edit and complete projects from previous cycles. Granted we should all be aware of the trickster figure that loses letters, misdials phones and misreads contracts, however, attention should be paid to the message that implies a newer perspective at this time. It is at this time that we are often able to see where our communication systems are breaking down and do something to rectify them.

Remedies when Mercury is Retrograde

- Rethink an important decision
- Reevaluate your goals
- Reflect on your communication skills and patterns
- Reconfirm your appointments and your travel plans
- Resolve the misunderstanding with a sibling, a friend, a work mate or a colleague
- Focus on what needs to be serviced or repaired – your car, computer, mobile phone, etc.
- Edit your manuscript, study in depth for your course, rehearse an important appointment
- Research the material you need for your assignment, your job, your creative project
- Renew your commitment to finishing incomplete projects
- Restart the gym program or the diet you gave up on a few months ago
- Take a break from your normal schedule to revisit some of your favourite places
- Resurrect the projects and plans you have let go but which are still on your mind
- Release the negative thoughts
- Breathe deeply, expect delays and treasure the insights

VENUS ☿

2004 Retrograde Period	Stations	Midpoint
May 18 – June 30	May 16- 20 June 28 – July 2	June 8 - 9

Venus turns retrograde every 19 months for approximately 6 weeks. Its cycle is less obvious, but there is an exquisite patterning. In a period of 8 years, Venus will retrograde 5 times. When it retrogrades again after 8 years, it returns to the same zodiacal position (less 2 degrees) on the same date (less 2 days) as it did eight years ago. Five periods of Venus retrograde are repeated in patterns every 8 years. When projected onto the circle of the zodiac Venus draws a pentagram at her retrograde stations tracing her mystical and magical legacy in the heavens. Once Venus begins to retrograde in a particular sign it continues its backward movement in that sign at intervals of eight years until all its degrees have been traversed.

Venus Retrograde occurs less frequently than any other planet. When retrograde, Venus is closer to the earth at the brightest time in her cycle, implying sensitivity to one's relating skills and an intensification of the quest for self-esteem. The period of the 40 days retrograde is often symbolic of the 40 days and nights spent in seclusion by mythic and religious figures. The retrograde period signals a time of reorientation and a sense of renewal in relating to the world as a loving and spirited individual. The period is a time to be secluded, reflective and meditative. Venus retrograde implies the time in the cycle when we withdraw from relationships to reflect upon them.

DIAGRAM 2: VENUS RETROGRADE PERIODS: 1996 – 2009

RETROGRADE		DIRECT		# OF DEGREES of ZODIAC	# OF DAYS RETRO
DATE	DEGREE	DATE	DEGREE		
20.05.96	28 ♀ 17	2.07.96	11 ♀ 47	16°30'	43
26.12.97	3 ♋ 56	5.02.98	18 ♎ 28	15°28'	41
30.07.99	5 ♍ 07	11.09.99	18 ♏ 47	16°20'	43
9.03.01	17 ♛ 44	20.04.01	1 ♛ 27	16°17'	42
10.10.02	15 ♎ 37	21.11.02	0 ♎ 03	15°34'	42
17.05.04	26 ♀ 09	29.06.04	9 ♀ 38	16°31'	43
24.12.05	1 ♋ 28	3.02.06	16 ♎ 01	15°27'	41
27.07.07	2 ♍ 57	8.09.07	16 ♏ 36	16°21'	43
6.03.09	15 ♛ 27	17.04.09	29 ♁ 12	16°15'	42

Venus represents a sense of personal worth and value, the quest for pleasure as well as the urge to beautify both inner and outer spheres of the self. Articles of adornment, cosmetics, a beautiful gift, a sensual massage, flower arrangements, perfume, all part of Venus' domain. Psychologically she also symbolises self-esteem. When she turns inward in her retrograde phase she focuses on her sense of self worth, needing reflections of what she values in her environment and in her relationships. When retrograde it is the time to redecorate the lounge room, reshape the garden or redesign the bedroom to reflect your taste. A new hairstyle, a bright scarf, a piece of jewelry, a spa bath, a massage improves the feelings of self-worth. The retrograde period may also highlight the current financial condition forcing a review of investments or reassessing the budget. Financial decisions of the past need to be reconsidered.

Venus' domain is also relationship. When retrograde it is appropriate to delve into the issues which are confronting your relationship, to reflect on the patterns in your relationships which do not

support you or to risk being vulnerable with a loved one. It is also time to resurrect what is incomplete in a past relationship in order to bring resolution and let it go.

Every retrograde period links back to a period eight years ago. Issues in Venus' sphere of relationship may be tied to a period eight years ago. Therefore what was incomplete or left unresolved in an important relationship may surface again for consideration. This year the period is particularly intense, as Pluto in its retrograde cycle will oppose retrograde Venus in the middle of their retrograde periods. Note the first week of June on your calendar to be alert for deeper relationship issues surfacing.

Remedies when Venus is Retrograde

- Schedule a retreat
- Make an appointment for a massage, beauty treatment
- Review your wardrobe, clear out what is no longer your style and shop for what is
- If you do not normally treat yourself then spend some of your savings on what makes you feel more valued. Buy yourself a gift. You deserve it! However if you are an impulsive buyer try to constrain your spending
- Redecorate the bedroom
- Visit an art gallery or a life-style exhibition
- Review your investment portfolio
- Prepare a financial and savings budget for the next nineteen months
- Reflect on your relationship patterns. Where are you not being valued? Where do you not feel equal? Do you do feel you deserve more?
- Set time aside to review and renew your relationships, perhaps recommit yourself to your partner
- Plan a holiday for only you and your partner
- Finish the novel, complete the painting, focus on your creativity

MARS ☿

No retrograde period in 2004

Mars is retrograde for a period of 58-81 days approximately every two years. It is the second less frequent retrograde planet and in 2003 it will not be retrograde. Mars Retrograde contains the impulse to act out therefore this is the opportunity to conserve energy and become more focused on the important goals. During these periods there is more likelihood of tapping into energy reserves, like the 'second wind' of a long distance runner. At these times you may feel more inclined to complete the task, no matter how difficult or impossible. The will and drive are stronger or maybe you are just more focused on the goal post. Sheer determination and a competitive spirit that urges to succeed against impossible odds are more likely at these times. However success is achieved focusing on incomplete projects not initiating new ones.

Anger and frustration need to be properly channelled during Mars retrograde periods as contentious issues put on hold are likely to erupt. Mars retrograde periods are times to slow down, relax, and peruse the energy outlay to date. There is only a certain amount of energy and it is necessary to conserve and direct it appropriately. When Mars is retrograde the energy is being re-channeled and results are not always tangible ones. Take stock of your goals during this time. The retrograde and direct stations of Mars are noteworthy as these times suggest that the stress building up may now be released to be redirected.

DIAGRAM 3: MARS RETROGRADE

RETROGRADE		DIRECT			
DATE MARS STATIONS RETROGRADE	DEGREE OF ZODIAC	DATE MARS STATIONS DIRECT	DEGREE OF ZODIAC	DEGREES OF ZODIAC COVERED WHEN RETRO	NO. OF DAYS RETRO-
Jul 29, 2003	10 ♃ 08	Sep 27, 2003	0 ♃ 07	10°01'	60
Oct 1, 2005	23 ♃ 25	Dec 10, 2005	8 ♃ 14	15°11'	71
Nov 15, 2007	12 ♄ 27	Jan 31, 2008	24 ♃ 05	18°12'	76

Remedies when Mars is Retrograde

- Tackle the time consuming and difficult parts of projects you are involved in
- Re-channel the aggressive instincts into activities which help you feel centered like yoga, Tai Chi, walking, swimming or bicycling
- Re-embrace a martial art or join a dance class
- Be aware of not overexerting yourself; be careful of pulled ligaments, torn muscles and strained backs
- Be careful of being too busy and taking on too much, say no to the things you want to say no to!
- Redefine some important goals
- Redirect some of your energy into self examination concentrating on feeling more centered and clearer about what you want
- Assert your intention to be in touch with what you want
- Be alert for aggressive instincts erupting around you; temper tantrums, road rage, and rude customers!
- Increase your fitness level and recommit yourself to a physical exercise program
- Be aware of sacrificing 'being' for 'doing'
- Don't confuse busy-ness with happiness; risk being happy

TIME OUT

While the retrograde period is only an 'apparent' movement, it is apparent that the familial ways of experiencing the planetary energies are changing. It is time for time out; it is quarter time. Time to rethink our strategies, review our outcomes, and redefine our goals. This is retrograde time when the cycle beckons us to integrate and solidify our experiences to date.