

Astrological Encyclopedia

Planetary Retrogradation

Planetary retrogradation, as studied in astrology, is a periodic, rhythmic action which illustrates the great evolutionary principle of *recapitulation*.

In ordinary mundane usage, retrogradation is considered to be synonymous with retrogression, which implies a process of decline, degeneration, going toward inertia, devolution, or counter-to-evolution. However, this interpretation is wrongly used when applied to life *within form* or to the orbital movement of the planets. It is true that when a vehicle of manifestation has fulfilled the purpose for which it was created, its substance, form, and organic function do enter upon a process of retrogression; the withdrawing of the Life-forces initiates a process of disintegration of the vehicle. But the Life-essence, which cannot die or disintegrate, awaits a suitable new vehicle for its further evolutionary expression and experience.

When we observe and thoroughly consider the great principle of *recapitulation* we recognize that it is a pattern or mode by which Nature *insures the thoroughness of evolutionary processes*. That which was accomplished on one round of a given cycle is recapitulated or reviewed at the resumption of the new activity in

order that the complete integrity of organic powers may be established. When recapitulation is undergone, that which was *established* is made the base of that which is to be established; the evolutionary program of the organism or entity is thereby made *continuous*, without *holes or breaks*. This principle is Nature's great safeguard for completeness and thoroughness of evolutionary processes. On the plane of human mentality, this principle is revealed in the faculty of *memory*; on the plane of organic functioning it is revealed in the cyclic pattern of birth, growth, maturity, and transition which is undergone by every evolving entity in each incarnation or cycle of manifestation. Max Heindel gives a most wonderful exposition of this principle in his writings concerning the great periods which mark the involution and evolution of our planet and the life it nurtures. With the inception of each new period, the previous period is *recapitulated* in order that integrity of function may be established.

In prayer-activity, the principle of recapitulation is advocated by many spiritual schools. To review in memory the thoughts, words, and actions of the previous day does *not* mean that the aspirant goes back or retrogresses; he makes his honest review of his experiences in thought, word and action *in order to distill spiritual value therefrom*. He analyzes, compares, and evaluates not only his thoughts, words, and actions but his motives; when he realizes a motive to have been impure, he *ejects that motive* from his consciousness by realization; the clarity of the realization will alchemically become a strength of Spirit by which he will, in future, avoid entertaining and acting upon that particular motivation. Has he gone backward in making his spiritual review? On the contrary, in making a constructive thing of the review, he has *gone forward*, even though the recapitulation may have included a scrutinizing of something very unpleasant— even

abhorrent—to his finer sensibilities. The word "recognition" means "to know again" and *recognition could well be identified as the basic purpose of all processes of recapitulation*. Recognition, by recapitulation, is insured by Nature for all planes, modes, and degrees of evolving consciousness.

One point must be made clear at the outset. Astrology does *not* teach that the planets of our system sometimes go backward. The retrograde action of the planets is a periodic *apparent* motion due to the axial and orbital rotation of the Earth—it is not actual. However, because of the relative observational changes—relative in the sense that the planets in geocentric astrology are zodiacally observed from the Earth rather than from the Sun—each one of the planets seems periodically to retrace a portion of its zodiacal travel, remain stationary for a period and then move forward again over the retraced area and forward into a new area.

Since the Earth and each planet has its own orbital speed and distance around the Sun, these retrograde and stationary periods follow a rhythmic plan of regular sequence not unlike, for illustration, the human's periods of conscious activity when awake and subconscious activity when asleep, or the rhythmic plan of seasonal changes through the sequence of years. We must remember that every principle which is illustrated by astrology has its correspondences in the life of the universe because the universe is the creation of *Consciousness* and astrology is the symbolized study of Consciousness. The picture of every factor in a human's natal horoscope is a picture of Principle, or Law, *revealed*; if further incarnation is necessary for the evolution of a human, then incarnation is made subject to the laws apprehended as *Space and Time*. A timing and placing of incarnation which includes the registration of a "retrograde" planet in the natal horoscope tells the reader something about that person's

evolution-of- consciousness just as does his Sun-sign, Moon-sign, Ascendant, or any planetary aspect.

The fullest significance of the Principle of Recapitulation may be gleaned from considering the evolution of consciousness to be represented as a *spiralic process*. Change is the one constant thing to be seen throughout life and the spiral represents the composite of the "upward, onward and always" that characterizes all life-processes. Involution, which is the necessary preparatory phase, is as much a part of the onward as evolution is—just as studies and lessons and practice are the preparatory phase of fulfilling an artistic or professional talent. In any line of endeavor, or expression of organic life, the involutory and evolutionary programs and objectives *always* contain periodic areas of recapitulation, but the start of the first recapitulation is always an extension from the initial point and every succeeding recapitulation is an extension from previous corresponding ones. Thus the linkages are formed and integrated; the spiral forms with unbroken continuity as individualized consciousness gains increasing awareness of its Self through organic experience.

— Back to Top —

A question might be raised on this point: what about stragglers—are they not retrogressing to inertia? The phenomena of individualized consciousness unable to keep step with the fellows of their life-wave must be considered also from a relative standpoint. These entities have delayed or postponed their evolutionary program for a tremendous period of time but because they were once individualized, they must some day make their return, in consciousness, to source. Since their individualization with others of their life-wave, they did proceed for a time on the evolutionary program—they have had some evolutionary

experience. Therefore, when they start again, their initial recapitulation will move them forward *faster* than they moved in their first attempt. These entities are not "lost forever;" they are channels for their Creator's Light and Life as all others are; they are retrogressing *only in relation to the progress of their evolving brothers*. They are having the experience that is *right for them to have* and will have their repeated individualization, recapitulations, and progressive steps in due course. Remember: in organic function and in consciousness, retrogression or retrogradation is *relative, not absolute*.

From the standpoint of geocentric observation, the Sun and Moon are always observed to be in "direct" motion; neither of them ever make the periodic retrogradation that characterizes the apparent action of the planets. The Sun transits the zodiac once a year and recapitulates its natal position on each birthday of the individual; the Moon, by transit, recapitulates its natal position every twenty-seven and a third days; by progression, every (approximately) twenty-seven and a third years. Moving forward from its natal position at the end of its first progressed tour of the zodiac, it enters the second cycle and recapitulates therein all the aspects to the natal combined with the additional factors of a different "set-up" of progressed planetary aspects, major transits and solar eclipses.

Solar and lunar recapitulation is also revealed in patterns formed by solar eclipses and Full Moons in this way: for example, solar eclipse, August 1952, in 28 Leo; Full Moon, February, 1954, in 28 Leo. This pattern spanned eighteen months of time and the Full Moon *recapitulated* the eclipse. The aspects made to the natal chart by the eclipse in such a case will key-note the experience of the person during that subsequent span of many months, and at the time of the recapitulating Full Moon, the spiritually-minded

astrologer will do well to make an evaluation- review of his experience, *distill constructive value* therefrom and build his soul body thereby. The periods which are characterized by the recapitulation of a solar eclipse by a Full Moon are usually found to cover eighteen or twenty-four months of time; the solar eclipse of Cancer, in July, 1953, was recapitulated by the Full Moon in Cancer, January, 1955.

The Sun and Moon reveal a *constant* backward movement in these ways: the Sun, by *precession*, moves backward through the zodiac and the sequences of eclipses, New Moons, and Full Moons will be observed to occur in "counter-zodiac" positions. Only the planets reveal the periodic "backward-stationary-forward" movement.

We have all seen instances of students being demoted in school, due to what appeared to be insurmountable difficulty with a certain subject or phase of a subject. The necessity for such a demotion did not indicate that the child was basically stupid, sub-normal, or "bad." It did indicate that he was not yet equipped successfully to fulfill the requirement of *that* grade for *that particular subject*. Therefore, since he was required to gain that specific learning, it was necessary to let him recapitulate by going back to the preceding phase of the subject, restudy, and re-digest that material and thereby *qualify*, by having *equipped himself*, to progress.

Our incarnated experience is *evolutionary schooling*. Just as we cannot assimilate all the material on a given subject in one term, so we cannot enter into all phases of human experience in one life. Everything else aside, the fact that we are organically polarized as males and females would make total experience impossible. Yet, by a long sequence of incarnations during which we can incarnate,

according to evolutionary need and karmic requirement, as male or female, we have the opportunity to fulfill all phases of experience pertaining to gender. Since concentration of thought and effort is necessary for success and fulfillment of our talents and professional endeavors, we use each incarnation to specialize in order to focus our consciousness and so derive the maximum benefit and development from what we do in work, or other activities and endeavors. However, just as individualization of consciousness demands eventual evolutionary fulfillment, so does any acceptance of experience demand fulfillment. And, very often, the Principle of Recapitulation must be utilized when, after accepting and living a certain phase of experience, we leave it for a while to focus our attention on other phases. That which was left in suspension was not forgotten; it was allowed, rather, to remain dormant, waiting future assumption and resolution. Herein is found a philosophic clue to the interpretive study of planetary retrogradation.

Natal retrograde, staying retrograde by progression throughout life:

— Back to Top —

The conditions indicated by the house ruled by this planet are indicated to be of secondary importance to the fulfillment of the *present life-assignment*; however, since all planetary factors have spiritual and evolutionary purpose and must be used by the entity, it appears that some form of vicarious fulfillment is indicated by this type of retrograde; in a future life, the fullness of expression represented by this planet will mark a major factor of the life-assignment—in the present life, the experience-factor represented by the planet and the house it rules is held in relative abeyance, so

that those factors which comprise the major evolutionary assignment for this life may be concentrated upon.

Natal retrograde, stationary by progression at end of life:

Indication that the assignment of *active recapitulation* will be assumed in the next life; the period of abeyance ends in this life and the next life will find the person *qualified* to resume, by recapitulation, those factors of experience which have been held in abeyance for perhaps several lives; this type of progression indicates that the person will assume a *new factor* of major significance in the next life-assignment, being one which he started and then turned from some time in a past life; it will contain considerable karmic content, residual from the long past, and perhaps several lives may be necessary to fulfill this assignment.

Natal retrograde, progresses stationary and then direct in this life:

Indication that the assignment of *active recapitulation* is to be assumed in the present life; the period of abeyance is finished and the experience represented by the planet becomes a *major evolutionary factor* of the present life's assignment when the planet moves forward into direct motion from the stationary period. The astrological reader will give very careful attention to the timing of the progressed direct motion, relating it to the current progressed planetary aspects, current solar-eclipse cycle and the progressed Moon quadrant. This type of planetary progression is one of the most important, from an evolutionary standpoint, because it marks the *second attempt* of the person in matters relating to the house ruled by the planet, and what is done in the remaining years of this life in regard to it will create

much obstructive or regenerative karma to be utilized in future. This type of progression marks a *major evolutionary turning-point* in the cyclic history of the individualized consciousness.

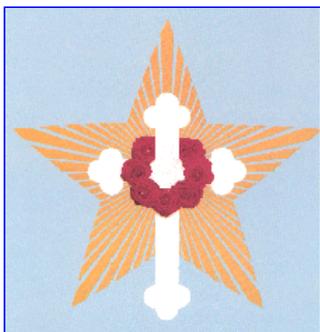
Natal retrograde, progresses stationary, direct and then *conjunct the natal position*:

The end of the period of abeyance and subjective recapitulation, the flowering of active recapitulation and *actual, direct, creative expression* of the planetary power; direct participation in the relationship-pattern and experience-factors represented by the planet, its house of rulership and house of occupancy. The particular aspect or phase of the soul-consciousness "comes into its own" and every natal aspect of regenerative quality—sextile or trine—indicated by the planet promises an upsurge of great *joy*. The natal squares or oppositions indicated by the planet will bring testings at that time of life but, in terms of the person's greater ability to handle them, bringing to bear *all* the resources of spiritual power for the necessary resolutions. When a planet is natively direct but turns, and stays, retrograde by progression the indication is that this life sees a "withdrawing" from the factors represented by the planet; this action seems to indicate that the person is going to focus his attention, evolutionarily speaking, on other factors. If this planet, by progression retrograde, reaches the conjunction of its natal position in the present life, the indication is completely given that the special planetary factors will not be of major importance in the next life.

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