

Has Anyone Seen Vertumnus?

Considering the Vertex in the Natal Chart

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Most astrologers who have ever lived spent their entire careers without taking into account the vertex. This node-like point was not postulated until the 1930's-40' when L. Edward Johndro coined the name. He, and his followers, did attribute significant meaning to the vertex, although Johndro apparently grappled with its relative value more than once. Is the vertex really effective? The following article invites students to consider this question, experimenting with their own charts to find answers for themselves. Calculate your Vertex now.

What is the vertex? The vertex is a theoretical point in the heavens where the ecliptic—the apparent orbit of the Sun around the earth—crosses the prime vertical—the plane that runs at right angles to the meridian and divides the celestial sphere from front to back. Already, it sounds fishy. A theoretical point?

The vertex/anti-vertex is only theoretical to the degree that the Ascendant and Midheaven are as well. The Ascendant is the point where the ecliptic intersects the horizon (instead of the prime vertical). The North and South Nodes of the Moon, also points of theoretical intersection, are found where the path of the Moon rises and falls across the ecliptic. They are all illusory because there is nothing really out there at that point in space—no fixed star, no asteroid, no planet—not to emphasize that the ecliptic itself is the imaginary path of the Sun around the earth.

Illusory or not, the vertex falls on the western side of the chart, with the anti-vertex found exactly 180 degrees away, on the eastern side. As with the Ascendant and Midheaven, an exact birth time is necessary to calculate the vertex. There is no point working with it unless you have one. That is the first rule.

What does the word vertex mean? The word vertex comes from the Latin root word *vertere*, meaning to change, to turn, turn frequently or spin. It also can mean a crowning point, summit, top or crest. Words having this Latin root include *vertebrae*, (joint, having something to turn on) *vertigo* (dizzy, disoriented, spun out) *vertical* (from top to bottom) *versatile* (doing many things at once, to turn from one thing to another)

and verticil (a circular arrangement around a fixed point, a whorl). The common theme here highlights change or movement, from one point to another, where the center remains fixed or the same.

Can mythology reveal anything about the vertex? Yes. The Roman god Vertumnus has roots in the Latin word *vertere*, to change, turn or spin. Vertumnus was a lesser god of gardens, fruit trees and seasons. Youthful and alluring, he had the power to change himself into various forms, just as the seed changes from root, to branch to leaf to fruit. Vertumnus used this ability in his avid pursuit of the goddess Pomona.

As the myth goes, Vertumnus fell in love with a strikingly beautiful goddess (in some versions nymph) named Pomona. Although she rejected all suitors, he fed his passion with the sight of her by changing his form and passing her gardens daily as a soldier, a harvester, a fisherman, etc. Ignoring him, Pomona remained devoted only to the cultivation of fruit trees. Vertumnus persisted and one day he altered his form to that of an old woman, greeted her with a passionate kiss, and proceeded to enter her gardens.

Vertumnus, (as the matron), talked to the goddess, attempting to convince her of the rewards of relationship and the dangers of rejecting love. The qualities and integrity of the youthful god Vertumnus were discussed. Finally, "she" told Pomona the story of a young man who cruelly took his own life after being spurned by his hard hearted love. He told of how the gods turned the rejecting woman into stone, but still Pomona was not persuaded.

Finally in exasperation, Vertumnus dropped his disguise and stood naked before Pomona in his true form. She thought she was seeing the sun immerge from behind the clouds and in the glorious light of Vertumnus, she opened her heart and reciprocated his love. Together still, they attend the gardens and fruit tress of the countryside.

The theme of this myth centers on a seemingly chance moment where an outstanding event occurs. To Pomona, it was like an epiphany, a sudden turn of fate, a radical awakening of perception. To Vertumnus, it was at first a well planned strategy, then finally an act of spontaneous desperation. Imagine his surprise when Pomona finally received him!

Love, relationship and union are highlighted here, not just in the desire of Vertumnus, but also in the story he told of the young man's rejection and the tragic consequences that followed. The imagery of the gardens, fruit and vine add to the feeling of ripeness, an event finally ready to happen, a fruitful experience.

How significant is the vertex astrologically? Here lies the debate. Some well-versed astrologers will say the vertex means relatively nothing. Others will say it is a point of great significance. If it does have meaning, what is it?

The vertex appears as a sensitive point linked to fateful encounters with others, seemingly sudden epiphanies, turning points in life and a destiny over which we have no control. Activated, it can synchronize with an experience of another whose effect registers as some degree of profound or extraordinary.

A strongly placed natal vertex (conjunct the horizon, in close aspect to a personal planet, in a critical degree or in the degree of the nodes) can indicate more consistent results.

What activates the Vertex? Three things can trigger, coincide or activate the vertex: transits, people and places.

Transits to the vertex can bring inner and outer events corresponding to a pivotal point, significant encounter with another or a sudden change of perception. The transiting planet activates the symbolism of the vertex, coinciding with a major or minor event. Keeping orbs tight and sticking mainly to the conjunction will bring more consistent results. A transiting conjunction from Mars would likely be more noticeable than a transiting trine from Uranus, although sometimes that is not the case. The magnitude of the effect depends on the prominence of the vertex itself, its relationship to other factors in the chart and the occurrence of other transits, commensurate or disparate. Along with transits, students are encouraged to consider progressions, converse progressions and directions.

Meetings with significant people, as seen through synastry and composite charts, may also link strongly to the vertex. (Think of people as constant transits.) When one person's inner planets or asteroids (Sun through to Jupiter), angles, nodes, vertex or certain Arabic parts conjunct the vertex, there can be a feeling of fate, destiny, rightness or wrongness about the encounter. Something in the contact with that person may have the ability to create profound change in the native, over a long or short period of time. The change may be perceived as pleasing or acrimonious, the conjunction often reflecting the former, the opposition the later.

Our location on the planet can awaken the vertex as seen through relocation charts and astro-carto-graphy. When we relocate, the vertex may become more prominent by changing house or aspect to an angle. The relocation vertex can signify places where meaningful encounters of a particular nature seem to happen more consistently.

What about the sign and house position of the vertex? The house positions of the vertex/anti-vertex can offer clues as to where we may experience turning points, meetings with destiny or fateful encounters in life. As noted earlier, the vertex falls usually between the fifth and the eighth house, on the western side of the chart, with the anti-vertex 180 degrees opposition.

In the fifth/eleventh house axis, there could be a propensity to experience fateful romantic or creative encounters (fifth house) through contacts with friends or groups (eleventh house). In the sixth/twelfth house axis, the turning point, or spin out, could effect our day by day living, or our link between psyche and soma (sixth house) through contact with those in the helping professions, those less fortunate or through dreams and creative fantasies (twelfth house). In the seventh/first house axis, sudden epiphanies could radically effect socially significant partnerships (seventh house) through an experience of projecting ourselves out into the world (first house). In the eighth/second house axis, destiny may arrive in the form of an erotic encounter or intense research (eighth house) perpetrated by a desire for pleasure, security or peace (second house).

The vertex/anti-vertex by sign can signify the way we may experience activation to this axis. Aries/Libra could indicate issues between personal will and sharing, where Taurus/Scorpio may be about security verses risk. Gemini/Sagittarius could contrast knowledge and vision, where Cancer/Capricorn could emphasize protection verses enterprise. The Leo/Aquarius axis might highlight self-expression as opposed to group participation where the Virgo/Pisces might compare structured boundaries and limitless longing.

Conclusions: The vertex is a point in the horoscope that can indicate a sense of destiny working through another person or outstanding event. It may be stimulated by transits, progressions or directions, other people (synastry/composite) or a change of location. The house and sign position can offer clues as to where the change or turning point may take place and in what way. All students are encouraged to watch the vertex in their own charts, determining for themselves the relative value. After all, we never know when Vertumnus might enter our garden in the guise of someone else, offering an unexpected turn of fate!

Calculating the Vertex-Most astrology software programs offer the option of calculating the vertex in the chart. To find the Vertex by hand, you calculate the Ascendant at your co-latitude. That's the Ascendant at 90 degrees, minus your latitude. The IC becomes the mid-heaven and, using the table of houses, you look up the

“Ascendant” (Vertex) associated with the new MC and latitude. OR, you can go to Astrodienst <http://www.astro.com/> and include it in the chart options, calculating it on line for free. (I would double check the hand calculations against their computer results at first, just to make sure.)



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