Ἀφροδίτη

Astrologically the Angel of Abundance is represented by the planet Venus.

Price, John Randolph (2010-11-24*). Angels Within Us: A Spiritual Guide to the Twenty-Two Angels That Govern Our Everyday Lives* (p. 56). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

According to Greek mythology, “Adonis was a handsome youth.… Aphrodite (called Venus in Roman legend) fell in love with him.

Price, John Randolph (2010-11-24). *Angels Within Us: A Spiritual Guide to the Twenty-Two Angels That Govern Our Everyday Lives* (pp. 139-140). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Aphrodite or Venus

Contents

Articles

References

Article Licenses

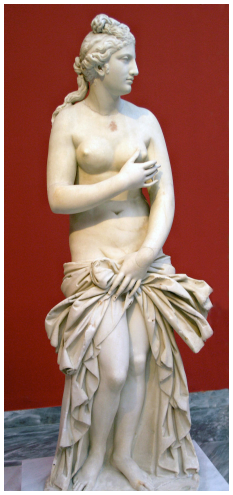
Aphrodite

This article is about the Greek goddess. For other uses, see Aphrodite (disambiguation).

"Cypris" redirects here. For other uses, see Cypris (disambiguation).

"Pandemos" redirects here. For the butterfly, see Pandemos (butterfly).

Aphrodite
Goddess of love, beauty and sexuality



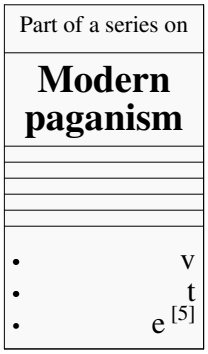
Aphrodite Pudica (Roman copy of 2nd century AD), National Archaeological Museum, Athens

Abode	Mount Olympus
Symbol	Dolphin, Rose, Scallop Shell, Myrtle, Dove, Sparrow, Girdle, Mirror, and Swan
Consort	Hephaestus, Ares, Poseidon, Hermes, Dionysus, Adonis, and Anchises
Parents	Uranus[1] or Zeus and Dione[2]
Siblings	Ares, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, Dionysus, Hebe, Hermes, Heracles, Helen of Troy, Hephaestus, Perseus, Minos, the Muses, the Graces, The Tree Nymphs, The Furies and The Gigantes
Children	Eros,[3] Phobos, Deimos, Harmonia, Pothos, Anteros, Himeros, Hermaphroditos, Rhode, Eryx, Peitho, Eunomia, The Graces, Priapus, Aeneas and Tyche (possibly)
Roman equivalent	Venus

Part of a series on

Ancient Greek religion and Modern Hellenismos

Hellenismos portal



Aphrodite ([i] /æfrəˈdaɪti/ *af-rə-**DY**-tee*; Greek: Ἀφροδίτη) is the Greek goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, and procreation. Her Roman equivalent is the goddess Venus.[6]

As with many ancient Greek deities, there is more than one story about her origins. According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, she was born when Cronus cut off Uranus's genitals and threw them into the sea, and she arose from the sea foam (*aphros*). According to Homer's *Iliad*, she is the daughter of Zeus and Dione. According to Plato (Symposium 180e), the two were entirely separate entities: Aphrodite Ourania and Aphrodite Pandemos.

Because of her beauty, other gods feared that their rivalry over her would interrupt the peace among them and lead to war, so Zeus married her to Hephaestus, who, because of his ugliness and deformity, was not seen as a threat. Aphrodite had many lovers—both gods, such as Ares, and men, such as Anchises. She played a role in the Eros and Psyche legend, and later was both Adonis's lover and his surrogate mother. Many lesser beings were said to be children of Aphrodite.

Aphrodite is also known as **Cytherea** (*Lady of Cythera*) and **Cypris** (*Lady of Cyprus*) after the two cult sites, Cythera and Cyprus, which claimed to be her place of birth. Myrtle, doves, sparrows, horses, and swans were said to be sacred to her. The ancient Greeks identified her with the Ancient Egyptian goddess Hathor.[7]

Aphrodite had many other names, such as Acidalia, Cytherea and Cerigo, each used by a different local cult of the goddess in Greece. The Greeks recognized all of these names as referring to the single goddess Aphrodite, despite the slight differences in what these local cults believed the goddess demanded of them. The Attic philosophers of the 4th century, however, drew a distinction between a celestial Aphrodite (Aprodite Urania) of transcendent principles, and a separate, "common" Aphrodite who was the goddess of the people (Aphrodite Pandemos).

Etymology

Aphrodite, perhaps altered after *aphrós* (ἀφρός) "foam", stems from the more archaic Cretan *Aphordíta* and Cypriot *Aphorodíta*, and was probably ultimately borrowed from Cypriot Phoenician.[8] Herodotus and Pausanias recorded that Aphrodite's oldest non-Greek temple lay in the Syrian city of Ascalon where she was known as *Ourania*, an obvious reference to Astarte. This suggests that Aphrodite's cult located at Cythera-Cyprus came from the Phoenicians. The fact that one of Aphrodite's chief centers of worship remained on the southwestern Cypriot coast settled by Phoenicians, where the goddess had long been worshiped as *Ashtart* (ʻštrt), points to the transmission of Aphrodite's original cult from Phoenicia to Cyprus then to mainland Greece.[9] So far, however, attempts to derive the name from Aphrodite's Semitic precursor have been inconclusive.

A number of folk etymologies have been proposed through the ages. Hesiod derives *Aphrodite* from *aphrós* "foam," interpreting the name as "risen from the foam".[10][11] Janda (2010), accepting this as genuine, claims the foam birth myth as an Indo-European mytheme. Janda intereprets the name as a compound *aphrós* "foam" and *déato* "[she]

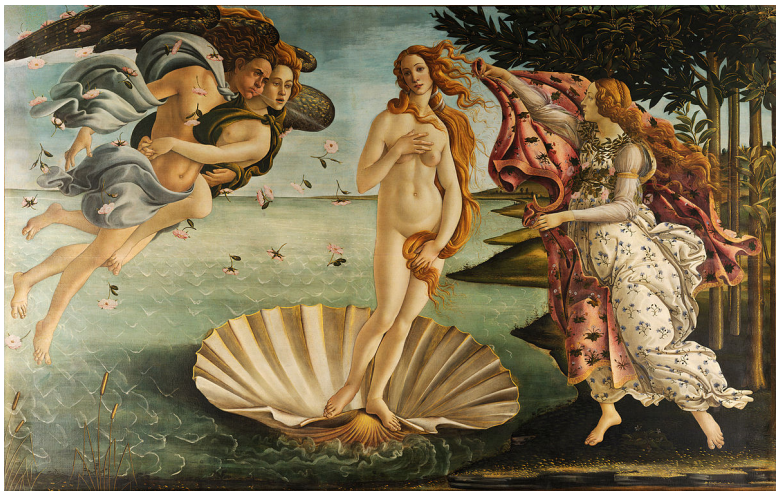
seems, shines", meaning "she who shines from the foam [ocean]", supposedly a byname of Eos, the dawn goddess.[12] Likewise, Mallory and Adams (1997)[13] propose an Indo-European compound **ab^{h}or-* "very" and **d^{h}ei-* "to shine", also referring to Eos. However, etymologies based on comparison with Eos are unlikely since Aphrodite's attributes are entirely different from those of Eos (or Vedic Ushas).[14] Finally, the medieval *Etymologicum Magnum* offers a highly contrived folk etymology, deriving *Aphrodite* from the compound *habrodíaitos* (ἁβροδίαιτος), "she who lives delicately", from *habrós* and *díaita*. The alteration from *b* to *ph* is explained as a "familiar" characteristic of Greek "obvious from the Macedonians",[15] despite of course that the name cannot be of Macedonian origin.

A number of improbable non-Greek etymologies have been suggested in scholarship. One Semitic etymology compares Aphrodite to the Assyrian *barīrītu*, the name of a female demon that appears in Middle Babylonian and Late Babylonian texts.[16] Hammarström (1921)[17] looks to Etruscan, comparing *(e)prϑni* "lord", an Etruscan honorific loaned into Greek as πρύτανις. This would make the theonym in origin an honorific, "the lady". Hjalmar Frisk and Robert Beekes (2010) rejects this etymology as implausible, especially since Aphrodite actually appears in Etruscan in the borrowed form *Apru* (from Greek *Aphrō*, clipped form of *Aphrodite*).

Mythology

Birth

Aphrodite is usually said to have been born near her chief center of worship, Paphos, on the island of Cyprus, which is why she is sometimes called "Cyprian", especially in the poetic works of Sappho. However, other versions of her myth have her born near the island of Cythera, hence another of her names, "Cytherea".[18] Cythera was a stopping place for trade and culture between Crete and the Peloponesus, so these stories may preserve traces of the migration of Aphrodite's cult from the Middle East to mainland Greece.



The Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli, *circa* 1485.

In the most famous version of her myth, her birth was the consequence of a castration: Cronus severed Uranus' genitals and threw them behind him into the sea. The foam from his genitals gave rise to Aphrodite (hence her name, meaning "foam-arisen"), while the Erinyes (furies), and the Meliae emerged from the drops of his blood. Hesiod states that the genitals "were carried over the sea a long time, and white foam arose from the immortal flesh; with it a girl grew." The girl, Aphrodite, floated ashore on a scallop shell. This iconic representation of Aphrodite as a mature "Venus rising from the sea" (*Venus Anadyomene*[19]) was made famous in a much-admired painting by Apelles, now lost, but described in the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder.

In another version of her origin,[20] she was considered a daughter of Zeus and Dione, the mother goddess whose oracle was at Dodona. Aphrodite herself was sometimes also referred to as "Dione". "Dione" seems to be a feminine form of "Dios", the genitive form case of Zeus, and could be taken to mean simply "the goddess" in a generic sense. Aphrodite might, then, be an equivalent of Rhea, the Earth Mother, whom Homer relocated to Olympus.

In Homer, Aphrodite ventures into battle to protect her son, Aeneas, is wounded by Diomedesk and returns to her mother to sink down at her knee and be comforted.

Petra tou Romiou ("The rock of the Greek"), Aphrodite's legendary birthplace in Paphos, Cyprus.

Adulthood

Aphrodite is consistently portrayed, in every image and story, as having had no childhood, and instead being born as a nubile, infinitely desirable adult. She is often depicted nude. In many of the later myths, she is portrayed as vain, ill-tempered and easily offended. Although she is married—she is one of the few gods in the Greek Pantheon who is—she is frequently unfaithful to her husband.

Aphrodite's husband Hephaestus is one of the most even-tempered of the Hellenic deities, but in the Odyssey she is portrayed as preferring Ares, the volatile god of war because she is attracted to his violent nature. Aphrodite is one of a few characters in the Odyssey whose actions are a major contributing cause of the Trojan War: she offers Helen of Troy to Paris, and as the goddess of desire, she is responsible for Paris becoming so inflamed with desire for Helen at first sight that he is moved to abduct her.

According to one version of Aphrodite's story, because of her immense beauty Zeus fears that the other gods will become violent with each other in their rivalry to possess her. To forestall this, he forces her to marry Hephaestus, the dour, humorless god of smithing. In another version of the story, Aphrodite marries Hephaestus after his mother, Hera casts him off Olympus, deeming him too ugly and deformed to inhabit the home of the gods. His revenge is to trap his mother in a magic throne. In return for her release, he demands to be given Aphrodite's hand in marriage.

Hephaestus is overjoyed to be married to the goddess of beauty, and forges her beautiful jewelry, including the cestus, a girdle that makes her even more irresistible to men. Her unhappiness with her marriage causes Aphrodite to seek other male companionship, most often Ares, but also sometimes Adonis.

Adonis

Venus and Adonis by Titian, *circa* 1554.

Aphrodite was Adonis' lover and a surrogate mother to him. Cinyras, the King of Cyprus, had an intoxicatingly beautiful daughter named Myrrha. When Myrrha's mother commits hubris against Aphrodite by claiming her daughter is more beautiful than the famed goddess, Myrrha is punished with a never-ending lust for her own father. Cinyras is repulsed by this, but Myrrha disguises herself as a prostitute, and secretly sleeps with her father at night.

Eventually, Myrrha becomes pregnant and is discovered by Cinyras. In a rage, he chases her out of the house with a knife. Myrrha flees from him, praying to the gods for mercy as she runs. The gods hear her plea, and change her into a myrrh tree so her father cannot kill her. Eventually, Cinyras takes his own life in an attempt to restore the family's honor.

Myrrha gives birth to a baby boy named Adonis. Aphrodite happens by the myrrh tree and, seeing him, takes pity on the infant. She places Adonis in a box, and takes him down to Hades so Persephone can care for him. Adonis grows into a strikingly handsome young man, and Aphrodite eventually returns for him. Persephone, however, is loath to give him up, and wishes Adonis would stay with her in the underworld. The two goddesses begin such a quarrel, Zeus is forced to intercede. He decrees that Adonis will spend a third of the year with Aphrodite, a third of the year with Persephone, and a third of the year with whomever he wishes. Adonis, of course, chooses Aphrodite.

Adonis begins his year on the earth with Aphrodite. One of his greatest passions is hunting, and although Aphrodite is not naturally a hunter, she takes up the sport just so she can be with him. They spend every waking hour with one another, and Aphrodite is enraptured with him. However, her anxiety begins to grow over her neglected duties, and she is forced to leave him for a short time. Before she leaves, she gives Adonis one warning: do not attack an animal which shows no fear. Adonis agrees to her advice, but, secretly doubting her skills as a huntress, quickly forgets her warning.

Not long after Aphrodite leaves, Adonis comes across an enormous wild boar, much larger than any he has ever seen. It is suggested that the boar is the god Ares, one of Aphrodite's lovers made jealous through her constant doting on Adonis. Although boars are dangerous and will charge a hunter if provoked, Adonis disregards Aphrodite's warning and pursues the giant creature. Soon, however, Adonis is the one being pursued; he is no match for the giant boar.

In the attack, Adonis is castrated by the boar, and dies from a loss of blood. Aphrodite rushes back to his side, but she is too late to save him and can only mourn over his body. Wherever Adonis' blood falls, Aphrodite causes anemones to grow in his memory. She vows that on the anniversary of his death, every year there will be a festival held in his honor.

On his death, Adonis goes back to the underworld, and Persephone is delighted to see him again. Eventually, Aphrodite realizes he is there, and rushes back to retrieve him. Again, she and Persephone bicker over who is allowed to keep Adonis until Zeus intervenes. This time, he says Adonis must spend six months with Aphrodite and

six months with Persephone, the way it should have been in the first place.

The Judgement of Paris

Main article: Judgement of Paris

The gods and goddesses, as well as various mortals, were invited to the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (the eventual parents of Achilles). Only the goddess Eris (Discord) was not invited, but she arrived with a golden apple inscribed with the word *kallistēi* ("to the fairest one"), which she threw among the goddesses. Aphrodite, Hera, and Athena all claimed to be the fairest, and thus the rightful owner of the apple.

This painting shows Paris surveying Aphrodite naked, with the other two goddesses watching nearby. This is one of the numerous works that depict the event. (*El Juicio de Paris* by Enrique Simonet, *circa* 1904)

The goddesses chose to place the matter before Zeus, who, not wanting to favor one of the goddesses, put the choice into the hands of Paris. After bathing in the spring of Mount Ida (where Troy was situated), the goddesses appeared before Paris. Having been given permission by Zeus to set any conditions he saw fit, Paris required the goddesses to undress before him to be evaluated. (Alternatively, the goddesses themselves chose to disrobe.) Still, Paris could not decide, as all three were ideally beautiful, so the goddesses resorted to bribes.

Hera tried to bribe Paris with control over all Asia and Europe, while Athena offered wisdom, fame, and glory in battle, and Aphrodite offered the most beautiful mortal woman in the world as a wife, and he accordingly chose her. This woman was Helen, who was, unfortunately for Paris, already married to King Menelaus of Sparta. The other two goddesses were enraged by this, and through Helen's abduction by Paris, they brought about the Trojan War.

Consorts and children

1. Hephaestus
2. Ares
    1. Phobos
    2. Deimos
    3. Harmonia
    4. Adrestia (or Adrasteia (nymph) or Adrasteia (goddess))
    5. The Erotes
        1. Eros
        2. Anteros
        3. Himeros
        4. Pothos
3. Poseidon
    1. Rhode (possibly)
4. Hermes
    1. Tyche (possibly)
    2. Hermaphroditos
5. Dionysus
    1. The Charites (Graces)
        1. Thalia
        2. Euphrosyne

3. Aglaea
2. Priapus (N.B. Some say that Adonis, not Dionysus was the father of Priapus)

6. Zeus
    1. Tyche (possibly)
7. Adonis
    1. Beroe
    2. Golgos
8. Phaethon (son of Eos)
    1. Astynoos
9. Anchises
    1. Aeneas
    2. Lyrus
10. Butes
    1. Eryx
11. unknown father
    1. Meligounis + several more unnamed daughters[21]
    2. Peitho

Other myths

In one version of the story of Hippolytus, she was the catalyst for his death. He scorned the worship of Aphrodite for Artemis and, in revenge, Aphrodite caused his stepmother, Phaedra, to fall in love with him, knowing Hippolytus would reject her.

In the most popular version of the story, as told in the play *Hippolytus* by Euripides, Phaedra seeks revenge against Hippolytus by killing herself and, in her suicide note, tells Theseus, her husband and Hippolytus' father, that Hippolytus had raped her. Hippolytus was oath-bound not to mention Phaedra's love for him and nobly refused to defend himself despite the consequences.

Theseus then cursed his son, a curse Poseidon was bound to fulfill, so Hippolytus was laid low by a bull from the sea that caused his chariot-team to panic and wreck his vehicle. Hippolytus forgives his father before he dies and Artemis reveals the truth to Theseus before vowing to kill the one Aphrodite loves (Adonis) for revenge.

Glaucus of Corinth angered Aphrodite. When he was competing in the chariot race at the funeral games of King Pelias she drove his horses mad and they tore him apart. His ghost was said to frighten horses during the Isthmian Games.[22]

Aphrodite Ourania, draped rather than nude, with her foot resting on a tortoise (Musée du Louvre)

In one Greek myth, Aphrodite placed the curse of snakes for hair and the stone-gaze upon Medusa and her sisters. Aphrodite was jealous of the three sisters' beauty, and she grew so jealous, she cursed them.

Forms of Aphrodite

For the Amathusian Aphrodite, see Aphroditus.

The Birth of Venus by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, c. 1879

By the late 5th century BC, certain philosophers had begun to draw a distinction between two separate "Aphrodites" (as opposed to a single Aphrodite whose characteristics varied slightly in different local cults of the goddess): *Aphrodite Ourania*, the celestial Aphrodite, born from the sea foam after Cronus castrated Uranus, and *Aphrodite Pandemos*, the common Aphrodite "of all the folk", born from the union of Zeus and Dione.[23] Among the neo-Platonists and, later, their Christian interpreters, Aphrodite Ourania is associated with spiritual love, and Aphrodite Pandemos with physical love (desire). A representation of Aphrodite Ourania with her foot resting on a tortoise came to be seen as emblematic of discretion in conjugal love. (We know of this representation, said to have been a chryselephantine sculpture made by Phidias for Elis, only from a parenthetical comment by the geographer Pausanias).[24]

Plato, in his *Symposium*,[25] has one of his characters, an Athenian named Pausanias (no relation to the geographer Pausanias), describe Aphrodite as two goddesses, one older, the other younger. The older one, Urania, is the daughter of Uranus, and inspires homosexual male (and more specifically, ephebic) love/eros; the younger is named Pandemos, the daughter of Zeus and Dione, and all love for women comes from her. The speech of Pausanias distinguishes two manifestations of Aphrodite, represented by the two stories: Aphrodite Ourania ("heavenly" Aphrodite), and Aphrodite Pandemos ("Common" Aphrodite).[26]

Aphrodite is also known as Areia,[27] showing her connection to Ares, the god of war, whom she had extramarital relations with. As a result, she was, to some extent, made into a goddess of war. This is especially true in Sparta.

Cult of Aphrodite

The epithet *Aphrodite Acidalia* was occasionally added to her name, after the spring she used for bathing, located in Boeotia (Virgil I, 720). She was also called *Kypris* or *Cytherea* after her birth-places in Cyprus and Cythera, respectively, both centers of her cult. She was associated with Hesperia and frequently accompanied by the Oreads, nymphs of the mountains.

Her festival, *Aphrodisia*, was celebrated across Greece, but particularly in Athens and Corinth. At the temple of Aphrodite on the summit of Acrocorinth (before the Roman destruction of the city in 146 BC), intercourse with her priestesses was considered a method of worshiping Aphrodite. This temple was not rebuilt when the city was re-established under Roman rule in 44 BC, but the fertility rituals likely continued in the main city near the agora.

Aphrodite was associated with, and often depicted with, the sea, dolphins, doves, swans, pomegranates, sceptres, apples, myrtle, rose trees, lime trees, clams, scallop shells, and pearls.

One aspect of the cult of Aphrodite and her precedents that Thomas Bulfinch's much-reprinted *The Age of Fable; or Stories of Gods and Heroes* (1855 etc.) elided[28] was the practice of ritual prostitution in her shrines and temples. The euphemism in Greek is *hierodoule*, "sacred slave." The practice was an inherent part of the rituals owed to Aphrodite's Near Eastern forebears, Sumerian Inanna and Akkadian Ishtar, whose temple priestesses were the "women of Ishtar," *ishtaritum*.[29]

The practice has been documented in Babylon, Syria and Palestine, in Phoenician cities and the Tyrian colony Carthage, and for Hellenic Aphrodite in Cyprus, the center of her cult, Cythera, Corinth and in Sicily (Marcovich

1996:49); the practice however is not attested in Athens. Aphrodite was everywhere the patroness of the *hetaera* and courtesan. In Ionia on the coast of Asia Minor, *hierodoulai* served in the temple of Artemis.

Modern Worship of Aphrodite

As one of the Twelve Olympians of the Greek pantheon and thus a major deity, worship of Aphrodite, (or *Aphrodíti*), as a living goddess is one of the more prominent devotionals in Hellenismos or Hellenic Polytheistic Reconstructionism.[30] Hellenismos or Hellenic Polytheistic Reconstructionism, revives ancient Greek religious practices for the present day.[31]

Worship in the Cult of Aphrodite today differs from the devotional practices of the ancient Greeks in several ways. Among Hellenistic Reconstructionists, views of Aphrodite as a lust or fertility goddess have largely given way to an understanding of her chiefly as a goddess of love and passion.[32] Such things as ritual temple prostitution are thought of as, at best, completely anachronistic outside of ancient Greek society, if not actually outright disapproved of. Instead, modern Hellenistic devotees make offers to her and invoke her name for her blessings and her favor for their romantic relationships, including sexually monogamous ones.[33] Here, ethical convictions of modern Hellenic polytheists are inspired by ancient Greek virtues of self-control and moderation.

Hellenic polytheists of today celebrate their religious devotion of Aphrodite during three main festival days. Aphrodisia, is her main festival day and is celebrated with the Attic calendar on the 4th of *Hekatombaion*, falling on the Gregorian calendar between the months of July and August, depending on the year. Adonia, a joint festival of Aphrodite and her partner Adonis, which is celebrated on the first full moon following the Northern spring equinox, often roughly as the same week the Christian festival of Easter is celebrated. And the fourth of each month, which is considered a sacred day of both Aphrodite and her son Eros.

Offerings to Aphrodite for the purposes of devotionals can include incense, fruit; particularly apples and pomegranates, flowers; particularly fragrant roses, sweet desert wine; particularly *Commandaria* wine from Cyprus, and cakes made with honey.[34][35]

Comparative mythology

Ancient Near Eastern parallels

The religions of the ancient Near East have a number of love goddesses that can be argued to be similar to certain aspects of Aphrodite.

Her cult in Greece was imported from, or influenced by, the cult of Astarte in Phoenicia.

Hans Georg Wunderlich further connects Aphrodite with the Minoan snake goddess.[36]

The Egyptian snake goddess Wadjet was associated with the city known to the Greeks as *Aphroditopolis* (the city of Aphrodite).[37]

Pausanias states the first to establish a cult of Aphrodite were the Assyrians, after the Assyrians the Paphians of Cyprus and then the Phoenicians at Ascalon. The Phoenicians, in turn, taught her worship to the people of Cythera.[38]

An origin of (or significant influence on) the Greek love goddess from Near Eastern traditions was seen with some skepticism in classical 19th-century scholarship. Authors such as A. Enmann (*Kypros und der Ursprung des Aphroditekultes* 1881) attempted to portray the cult of Aphrodite as a native Greek development.

Scholarly opinion on this question has shifted significantly since the 1980s, notably due to Walter Burkert (1984), and the significant influence of the Near East on early Greek religion in general (and on the cult of Aphrodite in particular) is now widely recognized as dating to a period of orientalization during the 8th century BC, when archaic Greece was on the fringes of the Neo-Assyrian Empire.[39]

In native Greek tradition, the planet had two names, *Hesperos* as the evening star and *Eosphoros* as the morning star. The Greeks adopted the identification of the morning and the evening stars, as well as its identification as Ishtar/Aphrodite, during the 4th century BC, along with other items of Babylonian astrology, such as the zodiac (Eudoxus of Cnidus).

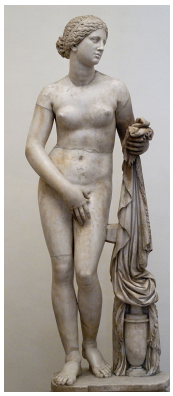
Comparison with the Indo-European dawn goddess

It has long been accepted in comparative mythology that Aphrodite (regardless of possible oriental influences) preserves some aspects of the Indo-European dawn goddess *Hausos (properly Greek Eos, Latin Aurora, Sanskrit Ushas).[40]

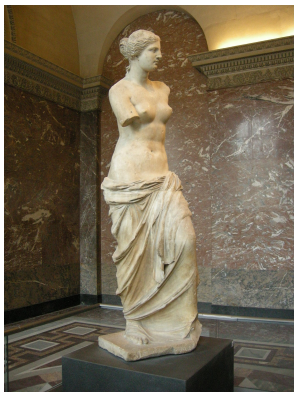
Janda (2010) etymologizes her name as "she who rises from the foam [of the ocean]" and points to Hesiod's *Theogony* account of Aphrodite's birth as an archaic reflex of Indo-European myth. Aphrodite rising out of the waters after Cronus defeats Uranus as a mytheme would then be directly cognate to the Rigvedic myth of Indra defeating Vrtra, liberating Ushas.

Gallery

The Venus Kallipygos. Aphrodite Kallipygos, "Aphrodite of the Beautiful Buttocks"),[41] is a type of nude female statue of the Hellenistic era. It depicts a partially draped woman[42] raising her light peplos[3] to uncover her hips and buttocks, and looking back and down over her shoulder, perhaps to evaluate them



The Ludovisi *Cnidian Aphrodite*, Roman marble copy (torso and thighs) with restored head, arms, legs and drapery support. The *Aphrodite of Cnidus* was one of the most famous works of the Attic sculptor Praxiteles (4th century BC).



Aphrodite of Milos (c.100 BC), Louvre

Aphrodite of Menophantos a Venus Pudica signed by Menophantos, 1st century BC, found at San Gregorio al Celio, Rome (Museo Nazionale Romano), of the Capitoline Venus type.

Fountain of Aphrodite in Mexico City.

Aphrodite Heyl, terracotta statuette of very high quality, probably from Myrina, 2nd century BC

The Venus Anadyomene, from Pompeii, believed to be a copy of a lost work by Apelles.

The Ludovisi Throne (460 BC?) is believed to be a classical Greek bas-relief, although it has also been alleged to be a 19th-century forgery

The Birth of Venus (1912), by Odilon Redon.

Aphrodite riding a swan: Attic white-ground red-figured *kylix*, c. 460, found at Kameiros (Rhodes).

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References

[1] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 188

[2] Homer, *Iliad* 5.370.

[3] Eros is usually mentioned as the son of Aphrodite but in other versions he is born out of Chaos

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Ancient_Greek_religion&action=edit

[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Paganism_(contemporary)&action=edit

[6] *Larousse Desk Reference Encyclopedia*, The Book People, Haydock, 1995, p. 215.

[7] Reginald Eldred Witt, *Isis in the ancient world* (Johns Hopkins University Press) 1997:125. ISBN 0-8018-5642-6

[8] Robert Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 179.

[9] Pausanias 1.14.6-7, W.S. Jones (trans.), Pausianas: Descriptions of Greece (London, 1931).

[10] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 176ff.

[11] Kretschmer *KZ* 33 (1895): 267.

[12] Janda, Michael, *Die Musik nach dem Chaos*, Innsbruck 2010, p. 65

[13] Mallory, J.P. and D.Q. Adams. *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture*. London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishing, 1997.

[14] Charles Penglase, *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia: Parallels and Influence in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod* (Routledge, 1997), 164; citing Deborah Boedeker, *Aphrodite's Entry into Greek Epic* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 15-6.

[15] Etymologicum Magnum, Ἀφροδίτη

[16] see Chicago Assyrian Dictionary vol. 2 p. 111

[17] M. Hammarström, *Glotta: Zeitschrift für griechische und lateinische Sprache* 11 (1921): 215f.

[18] Homer, *Odyssey* viii. 288; Herodotus i. 105; Pausanias iii. 23. § 1; Anacreon v. 9; Horace, *Carmina* i. 4. 5.
[19] *Αναδυόμενη* (*Anadyómenē*), "rising up".
[20] *Iliad* (Book V)
[21] Hesychius of Alexandria s. v. Μελιγουνίς: "Meligounis: this is what the island Lipara was called. Also one of the daughters of Aphrodite."
[22] Hyginus, *Fabulae* 250.3, 273.11; Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 6.20.19
[23] E.g. Plato, *Symposium* 181a-d.
[24] Pausanias, *Periegesis* vi.25.1; *Aphrodite Pandemos* was represented in the same temple riding on a goat, symbol of purely carnal rut: "The meaning of the tortoise and of the he-goat I leave to those who care to guess," Pausanias remarks. The image was taken up again after the Renaissance: see Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata / Les emblemes* (1584) (http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/french/emblem.php?id=FALc195).
[25] Plato, *Symposium* 180e.
[26] Richard L. Hunter, *Plato's Symposium*, Oxford University Press: 2004, p. 44
[27] T.T. Kroon, art. Areia (1), in T.T. Kroon, Mythologisch Woordenboek, 's Gravenshage, 1875.
[28] "Our work is not for the learned, nor for the theologian, nor for the philosopher, but for the reader of English literature, of either sex, who wishes to comprehend the allusions so frequently made by public speakers, lecturers, essayists, and poets, and those which occur in polite conversation." Bulfinch's obituary in the *Boston Evening Standard* noted that the contents were "expurgated of all that would be offensive".
[29] Miroslav Marcovich, "From Ishtar to Aphrodite" *Journal of Aesthetic Education* **30**.2, Special Issue: Distinguished Humanities Lectures II (Summer 1996) p 49.
[30] BBC News - The Greeks who worship the ancient gods (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22972610)
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[35] Aphrodite | Sacred Haven Coven (http://sacredhaven.ca/aphrodite)
[36] Wunderlich (R. Winston, tr.).*The secret of Crete* (1987:134)
[37] C.L. Whitcombe.*Minoan snake goddess*.8.*Snakes, Egypt magic and women*. Minoan Snake Goddess (http://witcombe.sbc.edu/snakegoddess/)
[38] Pausanias, Description of Greece, I. XIV.7 (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Paus.+1.14.7)
[39] see Burkert in his introduction to *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (1992), especially in pp 1-6.
[40] Dumézil.*Ouranos-Vàruna:Ètude de mythologie compáree indo-européene*. Paris Maisonneuve.1934
[41] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 188
[42] Homer, *Iliad* 5.370.

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External links

Wiktionary	Look up ***Ἀφροδίτη*** in Wiktionary, the free dictionary.
	Wikimedia Commons has media related to ***Aphrodite***.

- Theoi Project, Aphrodite (http://www.theoi.com/Olympios/Aphrodite.html) information from classical literature, Greek and Roman art
- The Glory which Was Greece from a Female Perspective (http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/19/arts/design/19wome.html?em)
- Sappho's Hymn to Aphrodite, with a brief explanation (http://afrodite.saffo.googlepages.com/aphrodite-sappho.html)`

Venus (mythology)

Venus (/ˈviːnəs/, Classical Latin: /ˈwɛnʊs/) is the Roman goddess whose functions encompassed love, beauty, sex, fertility and prosperity. In Roman mythology, she was the mother of the Roman people through her son, Aeneas, who survived the fall of Troy and fled to Italy. Julius Caesar claimed her as his ancestor. Venus was central to many religious festivals, and was venerated in Roman religion under numerous cult titles.

Venus on seashell, from the Casa di Venus, Pompeii. Before 79 AD.

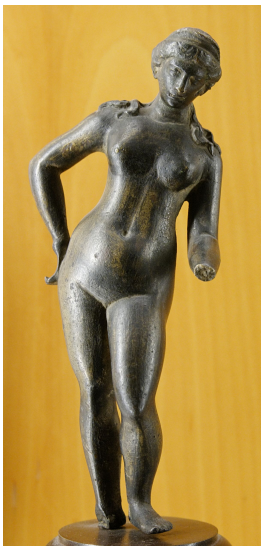
The Romans adapted the myths and iconography of her Greek counterpart Aphrodite for Roman art and Latin literature. In the later classical tradition of the West, Venus becomes one of the most widely referenced deities of Greco-Roman mythology as the embodiment of love and sexuality.

Name and attributes

Religion in ancient Rome
 *Marcus Aurelius (head covered) sacrificing at the Temple of Jupiter*
Practices and beliefs
• libation · sacrifice · *votum* · temples · festivals · *ludi* · funerals • Imperial cult · mystery religions
Priesthoods
• Pontifices · Augures · Vestales · Flamines · Fetiales · Epulones • Fratres Arvales
Deities
• List of Roman deities • Twelve major gods • Capitoline Triad · Aventine Triad • underworld gods · *indigitamenta* • **Deified emperors:** • Divus Julius · Divus Augustus

Related topics
• Glossary of ancient Roman religion • Roman mythology • Religion in ancient Greece • Etruscan religion • Gallo-Roman religion • *Interpretatio graeca* • Decline of Greco-Roman polytheism
• v • t • e [1]

Venus embodies sex, love, beauty, enticement, seduction, and persuasive female charm among the community of immortal gods; in Latin orthography, her name is indistinguishable from the Latin noun *venus* ("sexual love" and "sexual desire"), from which it derives.[2] Venus has been described as perhaps "the most original creation of the Roman pantheon",[3] and "an ill-defined and assimilative" native goddess, combined "with a strange and exotic Aphrodite".[4]



Bronze figurine of Venus, Lyon (Roman Lugdunum)

Her cults may represent the religiously legitimate charm and seduction of the divine by mortals, in contrast to the formal, contractual relations between most members of Rome's official pantheon and the state, and the unofficial, illicit manipulation of divine forces through magic.[5][6] The ambivalence of her function is suggested in the etymological relationship of the root **venes-* with Latin *venenum* (poison), in the sense of "a charm, magic philtre".[7]

In myth, Venus-Aphrodite was born of sea-foam. Roman theology presents Venus as the yielding, watery female principle, essential to the generation and balance of life. Her male counterparts in the Roman pantheon, Vulcan and Mars, are active and fiery. Venus absorbs and tempers the male essence, uniting the opposites of male and female in mutual affection. She is essentially assimilative and benign, and embraces several otherwise quite disparate functions. She can give military victory, sexual success, good fortune and prosperity. In one context, she is a goddess of prostitutes; in another, she turns the hearts of men and women from sexual vice to virtue.[8]

Images of Venus have been found in domestic murals, mosaics and household shrines (*lararia*). Petronius, in his Satyricon, places an image of Venus among the Lares (household gods) of the freedman Trimalchio's *lararium*.[9] Prospective brides offered Venus a gift "before the wedding"; the nature of the gift, and its timing, are unknown. Some Roman sources say that girls who come of age offer their toys to Venus; it is unclear where the offering is made, and others say this gift is to the Lares.[10] In dice-games, a popular pastime among Romans of all classes, the luckiest, best possible roll was known as "Venus".

Signs and symbols

Venus' signs were for the most part the same as Aphrodite's. They include roses, which were offered in Venus' Porta Collina rites,[11] and above all, myrtle (Latin *murtos*), which was cultivated for its white, sweetly scented flowers, aromatic, evergreen leaves and its various medical-magical properties. Venus' statues, and her worshipers, wore myrtle crowns at her festivals.[12] Before its adoption into Venus' cults, myrtle was used in the purification rites of Cloacina, the Etruscan-Roman goddess of Rome's main sewer; later, Cloacina's association with Venus' sacred plant made her Venus Cloacina. Likewise, Roman folk-etymology transformed the ancient, obscure goddess Murcia into "Venus of the Myrtles, whom we now call Murcia".[13]

Myrtle was thought a particularly potent aphrodisiac. The female pudendum, particularly the clitoris, was known as *murtos* (myrtle). As goddess of love and sex, Venus played an essential role at Roman prenuptial rites and wedding nights, so myrtle and roses were used in bridal bouquets. Marriage itself was not a seduction but a lawful condition, under Juno's authority; so myrtle was excluded from the bridal crown. Venus was also a patron of the ordinary, everyday wine drunk by most Roman men and women; the seductive powers of wine were well known. In the rites to Bona Dea, a goddess of female chastity,[14] Venus, myrtle and anything male were not only excluded, but unmentionable. The rites allowed women to drink the strongest, sacrificial wine, otherwise reserved for the Roman gods and Roman men; the women euphemistically referred to it as "honey". Under these special circumstances, they could get virtuously, religiously drunk on strong wine, safe from Venus' temptations. Outside of this context, ordinary wine (that is, Venus' wine) tinctured with myrtle oil was thought particularly suitable for women.[15]

Roman generals given an ovation, a lesser form of Roman triumph, wore a myrtle crown, perhaps to purify themselves and their armies of blood-guilt. The ovation ceremony was assimilated to Venus Victrix ("Victorious Venus"), who was held to have granted and purified its relatively "easy" victory.[16][17]

Cult history and temples

The first known temple to Venus was promised to *Venus Obsequens* ("Compliant Venus", or "Obedient Venus") by Q. Fabius Gurges in the heat of a battle against the Samnites. It was dedicated in 295 BC, at a site near the Aventine Hill, and was supposedly funded by fines imposed on Roman women for sexual misdemeanours. Its rites and character were probably influenced by or based on Greek Aphrodite's cults, which were already diffused in various forms throughout Italian Magna Graeca. Its dedication date connects *Venus Obsequens* to the *Vinalia rustica* festival.[18][19]

Remains of the Temple of Venus Genetrix in the Forum of Caesar, Rome.

In 217 BC, in the early stages of the Second Punic War with Carthage, Rome suffered a disastrous defeat at the battle of Lake Trasimene. The Sibylline oracle suggested that if the *Venus Erycina* ("Venus of Eryx"), patron goddess of Carthage's Sicillian allies, could be persuaded to change her allegiance, Carthage might be defeated. Rome laid siege to Eryx, offered its goddess a magnificent temple, captured her image and brought it to Rome, where it was installed in a temple on the Capitoline Hill, as one of Rome's twelve Dii consentes. Shorn of her more overtly Carthaginian characteristics,[20] this "foreign Venus" became Rome's *Venus Genetrix* ("Venus the Mother"),[21][22] As far as the Romans were concerned, this was the homecoming of an ancestral goddess to her people. Roman tradition made Venus the mother and protector of the Trojan prince Aeneas, ancestor of the Roman people. Soon after, Rome's defeat of Carthage confirmed Venus's goodwill to Rome, her links to its mythical Trojan past, and her support of its political and military hegemony.[23]

The Capitoline cult to Venus seems to have been reserved to higher status Romans. A separate cult to *Venus Erycina* as a fertility deity, was established in 181 BC, in a traditionally plebeian district just outside Rome's sacred boundary, near the Colline Gate. The temple, cult and goddess probably retained much of the original's character and rites.[][] Likewise, a shrine to Venus Verticordia ("Venus the changer of hearts"), established in 114 BC but with links to an ancient cult of Venus-Fortuna, was "bound to the peculiar milieu of the Aventine and the Circus Maximus" - a strongly plebeian context for Venus's cult, in contrast to her aristocratic cultivation as a Stoic and Epicurian "all-goddess".[24]

Towards the end of the Roman Republic, some leading Romans laid personal claims to Venus' favour. The general and dictator Sulla adopted *Felix* ("Lucky") as a surname, acknowledging his debt to heaven-sent good fortune and his particular debt to *Venus Felix*, for his extraordinarily fortunate political and military career.[25] His protégé Pompey competed for Venus' support, dedicating (in 55 BC) a large temple to *Venus Victrix* as part of his lavishly appointed new theatre, and celebrating his triumph of 54 BC with coins that showed her crowned with triumphal laurels.[26]

Pompey's erstwhile friend, ally, and later opponent Julius Caesar went still further. He claimed the favours of *Venus Victrix* in his military success and *Venus Genetrix* as a personal, divine ancestress – apparently a long-standing family tradition among the Julii. When Caesar was assassinated, his heir, Augustus, adopted both claims as evidence of his inherent fitness for office, and divine approval of his rule.[27] Augustus' new temple to Mars Ultor, divine father of Rome's legendary founder Romulus, would have underlined the point, with the image of avenging Mars "almost certainly" accompanied by that of his divine consort Venus, and possibly a statue of the deceased and deified Caesar.[28]

In 135 AD the Emperor Hadrian inaugurated a a temple to Venus and *Roma Aeterna* (Eternal Rome) on Rome's Velian Hill, underlining the Imperial unity of Rome and its provinces, and making Venus the protective *genetrix* of the entire Roman state, its people and fortunes. It was the largest temple in Ancient Rome.[29] Vitruvius recommends that any new temple to Venus be sited according to rules laid down by the Etruscan haruspices, and built "near to the gate" of the city, where it would be less likely to contaminate "the matrons and youth with the influence of lust". He finds the Corinthian style, slender, elegant, enriched with ornamental leaves and surmounted by volutes, appropriate to Venus' character and disposition.[30] Vitruvius recommends the widest possible spacing between the temple columns, producing a light and airy space, and he offers Venus's temple in Caesar's forum as an example of how not to do it; the densely spaced, thickset columns darken the interior, hide the temple doors and crowd the walkways, so that matrons who wish to honour the goddess must enter her temple in single file, rather than arm-in arm.[31]

Festivals

See also: Roman festivals

Venus was offered official (state-sponsored) cult in certain festivals of the Roman calendar. Her sacred month was April (Latin *Mensis Aprilis*) which Roman etymologists understood to derive from *aperire*, "to open," with reference to the springtime blossoming of trees and flowers.[32]

Veneralia (April 1) was held in honour of *Venus Verticordia* ("Venus the Changer of Hearts"), and Fortuna Virilis (Virile or strong Good Fortune), whose cult was probably by far the older of the two. Venus Verticordia was invented in 220 BC, in response to advice from a Sibylline oracle during Rome's Punic Wars,[33] when a series of prodigies was taken to signify divine displeasure at sexual offenses among Romans of every category and class, including several men and three Vestal Virgins.[34] Her statue was dedicated by a young woman, chosen as the most *pudica* (sexually pure) in Rome by a committee of Roman matrons. At first, this statue was probably housed in the temple of *Fortuna Virilis*, perhaps as divine reinforcement against the perceived moral and religious failings of its cult. In 114 BC *Venus Verticordia* was given her own temple.[35] She was meant to persuade Romans of both sexes and every class, whether married or unmarried, to cherish the traditional sexual proprieties and morality known to please the gods and benefit the State. During her rites, her image was taken from her temple to the men's baths, where it was undressed and washed in warm water by her female attendants, then garlanded with myrtle. Women and men asked Venus Verticordia's help in affairs of the heart, sex, betrothal and marriage. For Ovid, Venus's acceptance of the epithet and its attendant responsibilities represented a change of heart in the goddess herself.[36]

Vinalia urbana (April 23), a wine festival shared by Venus and Jupiter, king of the gods. Venus was patron of "profane" wine, for everyday human use. Jupiter was patron of the strongest, purest, sacrificial grade wine, and controlled the weather on which the autumn grape-harvest would depend. At this festival, men and women alike drank the new vintage of ordinary, non-sacral wine in honour of Venus, whose powers had provided humankind with

this gift. Upper-class women gathered at Venus's Capitoline temple, where a libation of the previous year's vintage, sacred to Jupiter, was poured into a nearby ditch.[37] Common girls (*vulgares puellae*) and prostitutes gathered at Venus' temple just outside the Colline gate, where they offered her myrtle, mint, and rushes concealed in rose-bunches and asked her for "beauty and popular favour", and to be made "charming and witty".[38]

Vinalia Rustica (August 19), originally a rustic Latin festival of wine, vegetable growth and fertility. This was almost certainly Venus' oldest festival and was associated with her earliest known form, *Venus Obsequens*. Kitchen gardens and market-gardens, and presumably vineyards were dedicated to her.[39] Roman opinions differed on whose festival it was. Varro insists that the day was sacred to Jupiter, whose control of the weather governed the ripening of the grapes; but the sacrificial victim, a female lamb (*agna*), may be evidence that it once belonged to Venus alone.[40][41]

A festival of **Venus Genetrix** (September 26) was held under state auspices from 46 BC at her Temple in the Forum of Caesar, in fulfillment of a vow by Julius Caesar, who claimed her personal favour as his divine patron, and ancestral goddess of the Julian clan. Caesar dedicated the temple during his unprecedented and extraordinarily lavish quadruple triumph. At the same time, he was pontifex maximus and Rome's senior magistrate; the festival is thought to mark the unprecedented promotion of a personal, family cult to one of the Roman state. Caesar's heir, Augustus, made much of these personal and family associations with Venus as an Imperial deity.[42] The festival's rites are not known.

Epithets of Venus

Imperial image of Venus suggesting influence from Syria or Palestine, or from the cult of Isis[43]

Like other major Roman deities, Venus was given a number of epithets that referred to her different cult aspects, roles, and her functional similarities to other deities. Her "original powers seem to have been extended largely by the fondness of the Romans for folk-etymology, and by the prevalence of the religious idea *nomen-omen* which sanctioned any identifications made in this way."[44]

Venus Caelestis (Celestial or Heavenly Venus), used from the 2nd century AD for Venus as an aspect of a syncretised supreme goddess. *Venus Caelestis* is the earliest known Roman recipient of a taurobolium (a form of bull sacrifice), performed at her shrine in Pozzuoli on 5 October 134. This form of the goddess, and the taurobolium, are associated with the "Syrian Goddess", understood as a late equivalent to Astarte, or the Roman Magna Mater, another supposedly "Trojan Mother of the Romans"[45]

Venus Calva ("Venus the bald one"), a legendary form of Venus, attested only by post-Classical Roman writings which offer several traditions to explain this appearance and epithet. In one, it commemorates the virtuous offer by Roman matrons of their own hair to make bowstrings during a siege of Rome. In another, king Ancus Marcius' wife and other Roman women lost their hair during an epidemic; in hope of its restoration, unafflicted women sacrificed their own hair to Venus.[46]

Venus Cloacina ("Venus the Purifier"); a fusion of Venus with the Etruscan water goddess Cloacina, who had an ancient shrine above the outfall of the Cloaca Maxima, originally a stream, later covered over to function as Rome's main sewer. The shrine contained a statue of Venus, whose rites were probably meant to purify the culvert's polluted waters and noxious airs.[47] Pliny the Elder, remarking Venus as a goddess of union and reconciliation, identifies the shrine with a legendary episode in Rome's earliest history, when the warring Romans and Sabines, carrying branches of myrtle, met there to make peace.[48]

Venus Erycina ("Venus of Eryx"), captured from Sicily and worshiped in Romanised form by the elite, and respectable matrons, at a temple on the Capitoline Hill. A later temple, outside the Porta Collina and Rome's sacred

boundary, may have preserved some Erycinian features of her cult. It was considered suitable for "common girls" and prostitutes.[49][50]

Venus Frutis honoured by all the Latins with a federal cult at the temple named *Frutinal* in Lavinium.[51] Inscriptions found at Lavinium attest the presence of federal cults, without giving precise details.[52]

Venus Felix ("Lucky Venus"), probably a traditional epithet, later adopted by the dictator Sulla. It was Venus's cult title at Hadrian's temple to *Venus Felix et Roma Aeterna* on the Via Sacra. This epithet is also used for a specific sculpture at the Vatican Museums.

Venus Genetrix ("Venus the Mother"), as a goddess of motherhood and domesticity, with a festival on September 26, a personal ancestress of the Julian lineage and, more broadly, the divine ancestress of the Roman people. Julius Caesar dedicated a Temple of Venus Genetrix in 46 BC. This name has attached to an iconological type of statue of Aphrodite/Venus.

Venus Kallipygos ("Venus with the pretty bottom"), worshiped at Syracuse.

Venus Libertina ("Venus the Freedwoman"), probably arising through the semantic similarity and cultural inks between *libertina* (as "a free woman") and *lubentina* (possibly meaning "pleasurable" or "passionate"). Further titles or variants acquired by Venus through the same process, or through orthographic variance, include Libentia, Lubentina, and Lubentini. **Venus Libitina** links Venus to a patron-goddess of funerals and undertakers, Libitina; a temple was dedicated to Venus Libitina in Libitina's grove on the Esquiline Hill, "hardly later than 300 BC."[53]

Julius Caesar, with Venus holding Victoria on reverse, from February or March 44 BC

Crispina, wife of Commodus, with enthroned Venus Felix holding Victory on reverse

Venus Murcia ("Venus of the Myrtle"), merging Venus with the little-known deity Murcia (or Murcus, or Murtia). Murcia was associated with Rome's Mons Murcia (the Aventine's lesser height), and had a shrine in the Circus Maximus. Some sources associate her with the myrtle-tree. Christian writers described her as a goddess of sloth and laziness.[54]

Venus Obsequens ("Obedient Venus" or "Compliant Venus"), Venus' first attested Roman epithet. It was used in the dedication of her first Roman temple, on August 19 in 295 BC during the Third Samnite War by Quintus Fabius Maximus Gurges. It was sited somewhere near the Aventine Hill and Circus Maximus, and played a central role in the Vinalia Rustica. It was supposedly funded by fines imposed on women found guilty of adultery.[55]

Venus Physica: Venus as a universal, natural creative force that informs the physical world. She is addressed as "Alma Venus" ("Mother Venus") by Lucretius in the introductory lines of his vivid, poetic exposition of Epicurean physics and philosophy, *De Rerum Natura*. She seems to have been a favourite of Lucretius' patron, Memmius.[56] Pompeii's protective goddess was *Venus Physica Pompeiana*, who had a distinctive, local form as a goddess of the sea, and trade. When Sulla captured Pompeii from the Samnites, he resettled it with his veterans and renamed it for his own family and divine protector Venus, as *Colonia Veneria Cornelia* (for Sulla's claims of Venus' favour, see *Venus Felix* above).[57]

Venus Urania ("Heavenly Venus"), used as the title of a book by Basilius von Ramdohr, a relief by Pompeo Marchesi, and a painting by Christian Griepenkerl. (cf. Aphrodite Urania.)

Venus Verticordia ("Venus the Changer of Hearts"). See Veneralia in this article and main article, Veneralia.

Venus Victrix ("Venus the Victorious"), a Romanised aspect of the armed Aphrodite that Greeks had inherited from the East, where the goddess Ishtar "remained a goddess of war, and Venus could bring victory to a Sulla or a Caesar."[58] Pompey, Sulla's protégé, vied with his patron and with Caesar for public recognition as her protégé. In 55 BC he dedicated a temple to her at the top of his theater in the Campus Martius. She had a shrine on the Capitoline Hill, and festivals on August 12 and October 9. A sacrifice was annually dedicated to her on the latter date. In neo-classical art, her epithet as Victrix is often used in the sense of 'Venus Victorious over men's hearts' or in the context of the Judgement of Paris (e.g. Canova's *Venus Victrix*, a half-nude reclining portrait of Pauline Bonaparte).

Mythology and literature

A Venus-Aphrodite *velificans* holding an infant, probably Aeneas,[59] as Anchises and Luna-Selene look on (Roman-era relief from Aphrodisias)

For more details on this topic, see Aphrodite.


Venus and Mars, with Cupid attending, in a wall painting from Pompeii

As with most major gods and goddesses in Roman mythology, the literary concept of Venus is mantled in whole-cloth borrowings from the literary Greek mythology of her counterpart, Aphrodite. In some Latin mythology Cupid was the son of Venus and Mars, the god of war. At other times, or in parallel myths and theologies, Venus was understood to be the consort of Vulcan. Virgil, in compliment to his patron Augustus and the *gens Julia*, embellished an existing connection between Venus, whom Julius Caesar had adopted as his protectress, and Aeneas. Vergil's Aeneas is guided to Latium by Venus in her heavenly form, the morning star, shining brightly before him in the daylight sky; much later, she lifts Caesar's soul to heaven.[60] In Ovid's *Fasti* Venus came to Rome because she "preferred to be worshipped in the city of her own offspring".[61] In Vergil's poetic account of Octavian's victory at the sea-battle of Actium, the future emperor is allied with Venus, Neptune and Minerva. Octavian's opponents, Antony, Cleopatra and the Egyptians, assisted by bizarre and unhelpful deities such as "barking" Anubis, lose the battle.[62]

In the *interpretatio romana* of the Germanic pantheon during the early centuries AD, Venus became identified with the Germanic goddess *Frijjo*, giving rise to the loan translation "Friday" for *dies Veneris*. The historical cognate of the dawn goddess in Germanic tradition, however, would be Ostara.

In art

Classical art

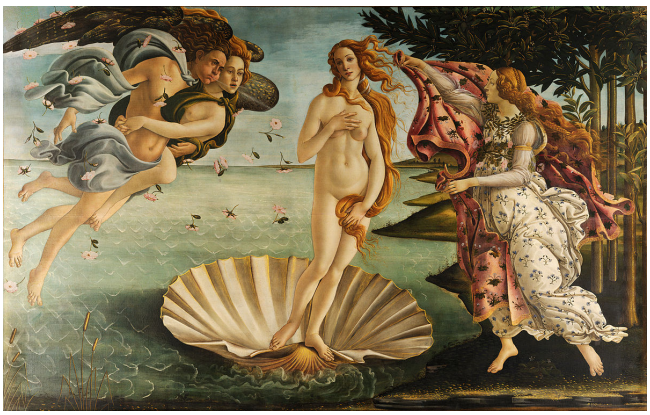
Roman and Hellenistic art produced many variations on the goddess, often based on the Praxitlean type Aphrodite of Cnidus. Many female nudes from this period of sculpture whose subjects are unknown are in modern art history conventionally called 'Venus'es, even if they originally may have portrayed a mortal woman rather than operated as a cult statue of the goddess.

Examples include:

- Venus de Milo (130 BC)
- Venus de' Medici
- Capitoline Venus
- Esquiline Venus
- Venus Felix
- Venus of Arles
- Venus Anadyomene (also here)
- Venus, Pan and Eros
- Venus Genetrix
- Venus of Capua
- Venus Kallipygos
- Venus Pudica

Art in the classical tradition

Venus became a popular subject of painting and sculpture during the Renaissance period in Europe. As a "classical" figure for whom nudity was her natural state, it was socially acceptable to depict her unclothed. As the goddess of sexuality, a degree of erotic beauty in her presentation was justified, which appealed to many artists and their patrons. Over time, *venus* came to refer to any artistic depiction in post-classical art of a nude woman, even when there was no indication that the subject was the goddess.



The Birth of Venus, by Sandro Botticelli c. 1485–1486.

- The Birth of Venus (Botticelli) (c. 1485)
- Sleeping Venus (c. 1501)
- Venus of Urbino (1538)
- Venus with a Mirror (c. 1555)
- Rokeby Venus
- Olympia (1863)
- The Birth of Venus (Cabanel) (1863)
- The Birth of Venus (Bouguereau) (1879)
- Venus of Cherchell, Gsell museum in Algeria
- *Venus Victrix*, and *Venus Italica* by Antonio Canova

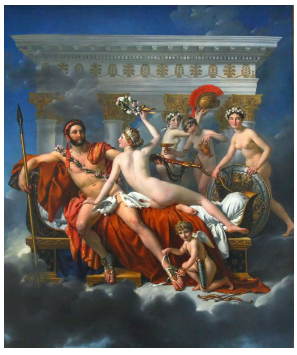
In the field of prehistoric art, since the discovery in 1908 of the so-called "Venus of Willendorf" small Neolithic sculptures of rounded female forms have been conventionally referred to as Venus figurines. Although the name of the actual deity is not known, the knowing contrast between the obese and fertile cult figures and the classical conception of Venus has raised resistance to the terminology.

Gallery

Venus Anadyomene (ca. 1525) by Titian

Venus with a Mirror (ca. 1555) by Titian

Venus looking in the mirror, with Cupid attending, painting ca. 1650 - 1700, by Peter Paul Rubens



Mars Being Disarmed by Venus (1822–25) by Jacques-Louis David

Birth of Venus (1863) by Alexandre Cabanel

Tannhäuser in the Venusberg (1901) by John Collier

Russian Venus (1926) by Boris Kustodiev

Medieval and modern music

In Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*, which draws on the medieval German legend of the knight and poet Tannhäuser, Venus lives beneath the Venusberg mountain. Tannhäuser breaks his knightly vows by spending a year there with Venus, under her enchantment. When he emerges, he has to seek penance for his sins. There is also a song named "Venus" written, produced and sung by Lady Gaga, as well as a song named "Birth of Venus Illegitima" by the Swedish symphonic metal Therion, on the album Vovin.

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[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Ancient_Roman_religion&action=edit

[2] Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary, 1879, "Venus", (B, Transf. (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:entry=Venus1), at perseus.org. It has connections to *venerari* (to honour, to try to please) and *venia* (grace, favour) through a possible common root in an Indo-European **wenes-*, comparable to Sanskrit *vanas-* "lust, desire". See Etymonline link (Harper) (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=Venus). See also William W.Skeat *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* New York, 2011 (first ed. 1882) s. v. venerable, venereal, venial. The Vedic goddess Ushas is linked to Latin "Venus" by the Vedic Sanskrit epithet *vanas-* "(female) loveliness; longing, desire". Their common Proto-Indo-European root is assumed as **wen-* "to desire").

[3] Schilling, R., p. 146.

[4] Eden, p. 458ff. Eden is discussing possible associations between the Venus of Eryx and the brassica species *Eruca sativa* (known in Europe as Rocket), which the Romans considered an aphrodisiac.

[5] R. Schilling *La religion romaine de Venus depuis les origines jusqu'au temps d' Auguste* Paris, 1954, pp. 13–64

[6] R. Schilling "La relation Venus venia", *Latomus*, 21, 1962, pp. 3–7

[7] Linked through an adjectival form **venes-no-*: William W. Skeat *ibid.* s.v. "venom"

[8] Staples, Ariadne, *From Good Goddess to vestal virgins: sex and category in Roman religion*, Routledge, 1998, pp. 12, 15-16, 24 - 26, 149 - 150: Varro's theology identifies Venus with water as an aspect of the female principle. To generate life, the watery matrix of the womb requires the virile warmth of fire. To sustain life, water and fire must be balanced; excess of either one, or their mutual antagonism, are unproductive or destructive.

[9] Kaufmann-Heinimann, in Rüpke (ed), 197–8.

[10] Hersch, Karen K., The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 66 - 67.

[11] Eden, P.T., Venus and the Cabbage, Hermes, 91, (1963), p. 456, citing Ovid, *Fasti* 4, 869-870, cf. I35-I38; Ovid describes the rites observed in the early Imperial era, when the temple environs were part of the Gardens of Sallust.

[12] Versnel, H. S., *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion, Vol. 2, Transition and reversal in myth and ritual,* BRILL, 1994, p. 262 (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=kWU33X4gPmUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Inconsistencies+in+Greek+and+Roman+Religion:+Transition+and+reversal+in+myth&source=bl&ots=-Uy8IKisL1&sig=STtg94MzGZ0jPlFq0TK09NPcNwk&hl=en&ei=ukfgTJ79I8XMhAfcq_3JDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CCMQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false)

[13] Eden, pp. 457 - 8, citing Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 15, 119 - 121. *Murcia* had a shrine at the Circus Maximus.

[14] "Bona Dea" means the "The Good Goddess". She was also a "Women's goddess".

[15] Versnel, H. S., *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion, Vol. 2, Transition and reversal in myth and ritual,* BRILL, 1994, p. 262; see also Versnel, H.S., "The Festival for Bona Dea and the Thesmophoria", *Greece & Rome, Second Series*, 39, 1, (Apr., 1992), p. 44, citing Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae*, 20. For the total exclusion of myrtle (and therefore Venus) at Bona Dea's rites, see Bona Dea article.

[16] In the Triumph, the general was drawn in a four-horse chariot before his troops. He wore Jupiter's laurel crown, and was applauded as Jupiter's embodiment for the day – or a king, by any other name. See Mary Beard, The Roman Triumph, The Belknap Press, 2007.

[17] Brouwer, Henrik H. J., *Bona Dea, The Sources and a Description of the Cult,* Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain, 110, BRILL, 1989: citing Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 23, 152 - 158, and Book 15, 125.

[18] Eden, P.T., "Venus and the Cabbage" Hermes, 91, (1963) p. 456.

[19] Schilling, R. *La Religion romaine de Venus*, BEFAR, Paris, 1954, p.87, suggests that Venus began as an abstraction of personal qualities, later assuming Aphrodite's attributes.

[20] Her Sicillian form probably combined elements of Aphrodite and a more warlike Carthaginian-Phoenician Astarte

[21] Beard *et al*, Vol 1., pp. 80, 83: see also Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 23.31.

[22] Orlin, Eric (2007), in Rüpke, J, ed. *A Companion to Roman Religion*, Blackwell publishing, p. 62.

[23] Venus' links with Troy can be traced to the epic, mythic history of the Trojan War, and the Judgement of Paris, in which the Trojan prince Paris chose Aphrodite over Hera and Athena, setting off a train of events that led to war between the Greeks and Trojans, and eventually to Troy's destruction. In Rome's foundation myth, Venus was the divine mother of the Trojan prince Aeneas, and thus a divine ancestor of the Roman people as a whole. Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, The Belknap Press, 2007, p. 23. The Punic Wars saw many similar introductions of foreign cult, including the Phrygian cult to Magna Mater, who also had mythical links to Troy. See also Beard *et al*, Vol. 1, p. 80.

[24] Mario Torelli, *Typology and Structure of Roman Historical Reliefs*, University of Michigan Press, 1992, pp. 8 - 9: the aristocratic ideology of an increasingly Hellenised Venus is "summarized by the famous invocation to *Venus Physica* in Lucretius' poem."

[25] Plutarch's original Greek translates this adopted surname, Felix, as Epaphroditus (Aphrodite's beloved); see Plutarch, Sulla 19.9.

[26] Beard, 2007, pp. 22 - 23.

[27] Orlin, in Rüpke (ed), pp. 67 - 69: "At the battle of Pharsalus, Caesar also vowed a temple, in best republican fashion, to Venus Victrix, almost as if he were summoning Pompey's protectress to his side in the manner of an *evocatio*. Three years after Pompey's defeat at the battle of Actium, Caesar dedicated his new Roman Forum, complete with a temple to his ancestor *Venus Genetrix*, "apparently in fulfillment of the vow". The goddess helped provide a divine aura for her descendant, preparing the way for Caesar's own cult as a divus and the formal institution of the Roman Imperial cult.

[28] Beard *et al*., Vol 1, pp. 199 - 200.

[29] See James Grout, *Encyclopedia Romana*, "Temple of Venus and Rome," online (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/romanurbs/venusrome.html). See also Beard *et al*, Vol. 1, pp. 257 - 8, 260.

[30] Immediately after these remarks, Vitruvius prescribes the best positioning for temples to Venus' two divine consorts, Vulcan and Mars. Vulcan's should be outside the city, to reduce the dangers of fire, which is his element; Mars' too should be outside the city, so that "no armed frays may disturb the peace of the citizens, and that this divinity may, moreover, be ready to preserve them from their enemies and the perils of war." Book 1, 7,1. (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Vitruvius/1*.html#7.1)

[31] The widely spaced, open style preferred by Vitruvius is *eustylos*. The densely pillared style he criticises is *pycnostylos*. Book 3, 1, 5. (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Vitruvius/3*.html#1.5)

[32] The origin is unknown, but it might derive from *Apru*, an Etruscan form of Greek Aphrodite's name. (http://etymonline.com/index.php?term=April)

[33] Either the Sibylline Books (Valerius Maximus, 8. 15. 12) or the Cumaean Sibyl (Ovid, *Fasti*, 4. 155 - 62).

[34] See Staples, Ariadne, *From Good Goddess to vestal virgins: sex and category in Roman religion*, Routledge, 1998, pp. 105 - 9.

[35] Carter, Jesse Benedict, "The Cognomina of the Goddess 'Fortuna,'" *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* , Vol. 31, 1900, p. 66. (http://www.jstor.org/stable/282639)

[36] Langlands, p. 59, citing Ovid, *Fasti*, 4. 155 - 62. Romans considered personal ethics or mentality to be functions of the heart.

[37] Olivier de Cazanove, "Jupiter, Liber et le vin latin", Revue de l'histoire des religions, 1988, Vol. 205, Issue 205-3, pp. 245-265 persee (http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/rhr_0035-1423_1988_num_205_3_1888)

[38] Staples, p. 122, citing Ovid, *Fasti*, 4,863 - 872.

[39] Vegetable-growers may have been involved in the dedications as a corporate guild: see Eden, P.T., "Venus and the Cabbage" *Hermes*, 91, (1963) p. 451.

[40] For associations of kind between Roman deities and their sacrificial victims, see Victima.

[41] Lipka, Michael, *Roman Gods: A Conceptual Approach*, BRILL, 2009, p. 42; citing Varro, *Lingua Latina*, 6. 16; Varro's explicit denial that the festival belongs to Venus implies his awareness of opposite scholarly and commonplace opinion. Lipka offers this apparent contradiction as an example of two Roman cults that offer "complementary functional foci".

[42] Sulla may have set some form of precedent, but there is no evidence that he built her a Temple. Caesar's associations with Venus as both a personal and state goddess may also have been propagated in the Roman provinces. See James Rives, "Venus Genetrix outside Rome", *Phoenix*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter, 1994), pp. 294-306.

[43] Description (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_-_Venus_-_Walters_54966.jpg) from Walters Art Museum

[44] See Eden, p. 457. For further exposition of *nomen-omen* (or *nomen est omen*) see Del Bello, Davide, *Forgotten paths: etymology and the allegorical mindset*, The Catholic University of America Press, 2007, p.52 ff. (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=AQh7PdkctiYC&pg=PT52&dq=omen&cd=3&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Venus&f=false)

[45] Turcan, p. 141 - 143.

[46] R. Schilling *La religion romaine de Venus depuis les origines jusqu'au temps d'August* Paris, 1954, pp. 83–89: "L'origine probable du cult de Venus". Ashby (1929) finds the existence of a temple to Venus Calva "very doubtful"; see Samuel Ball Platner (completed and revised by Thomas Ashby), *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, London, Oxford University Press, 1929, p551. (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Roma/Rome/_Texts/PLATOP*/Venus_Calva.html)

[47] Eden, p. 457, citing Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Book 15, 119 - 121.

[48] Pliny the Elder, Natural History, 15, 119, cited in Wagenvoort, p. 180.

[49] Beard *et al*, Vol 1., pp. 80, 83: see also Livy Ab Urbe Condita 23.31.

[50] Thomas A. J. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome,* Oxford University Press, 1998, p.25.

[51] Paulus-Festus s. v. p. 80 L: *Frutinal templum Veneris Fruti*. Strabo V 3, 5: "At the midway between Ostia and Antium lies Lavinium that has a sanctuary of Aphrodite common to all Latin nations, but which is under the care of the Ardeans, who have entrusted the task to intendents".

[52] CIL X 797: "*Sp. Turrianus Proculus Gellianus... pater patratus...Lavinium sacrorum principiorum p(opuli) R(omani) Quirt(ium) nominisque Latini qui apud Laurentis coluntur*". Cited in B. Liou-Gilles "Naissance de la ligue latine. Mythe et culte de fondation" in *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* **74** 1996 1 p.85.

[53] See Eden, p. 457. Varro rationalises the connections as *"lubendo libido, libidinosus ac Venus Libentina et Libitina"* (*Lingua Latina*, 6, 47).

[54] Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, IV. 16; Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes*, IV. 9. 16; *Murcus* in Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 1, 33, 5 - cf *murcidus* = "slothful".

[55] Staples, Ariadne, *From Good Goddess to vestal virgins: sex and category in Roman religion*, Routledge, 1998, p. 89.

[56] Elisabeth Asmis, "Lucretius' Venus and Stoic Zeus", *Hermes*, 110, (1982), p. 458 ff.

[57] A. Lill, "Myths of Pompeii: reality and legacy", *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 2011, p. 141, online (http://ojs.utlib.ee/index.php/bjah/article/viewFile/814/792) (accessed 19 August 2013)

[58] Thus Walter Burkert, in *Homo Necans* (1972) 1983:80, noting C. Koch on "Venus Victrix" in *Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, **8** A860-64.

[59] Sometimes interpreted as Eros-Cupid, as a symbol of the sexual union between the goddess and Anchises, but perhaps alluding also to the scene in the *Aeneid* when Dido holds Cupid disguised as Ascanius in her lap as she falls in love with Aeneas.

[60] Venus as a guide and protector of Aeneas and his descendants is frequent motif in the Aeneid. See discussion throughout M. F. Williams, *The Sidus Iulium, the divinity of men, and the Golden Age in Virgil" s Aeneid*, Leeds International Classical Studies, 2003 (http://lics.leeds.ac.uk/2003/200301.pdf)

[61] Orlin, Eric M., "Foreign Cults in Republican Rome: Rethinking the Pomerial Rule", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, Vol. 47 (2002) University of Michigan Press, p. 4, note 14, citing Ovid, Fasti, 4.876.

[62] Vergil, *Aeneid*, 8.696-700.

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- Warburg Institute Iconographic Database (ca 2,300 images of Venus) (http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/vpc/VPC_search/subcats.php?cat_1=5&cat_2=43)
- 'Venus Chiding Cupid for Learning to Cast Accounts' (http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/picture-of-month/displaypicture.asp?venue=7&id=86) by Sir Joshua Reynolds at the Lady Lever Art Gallery (http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ladylever/index.asp)

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